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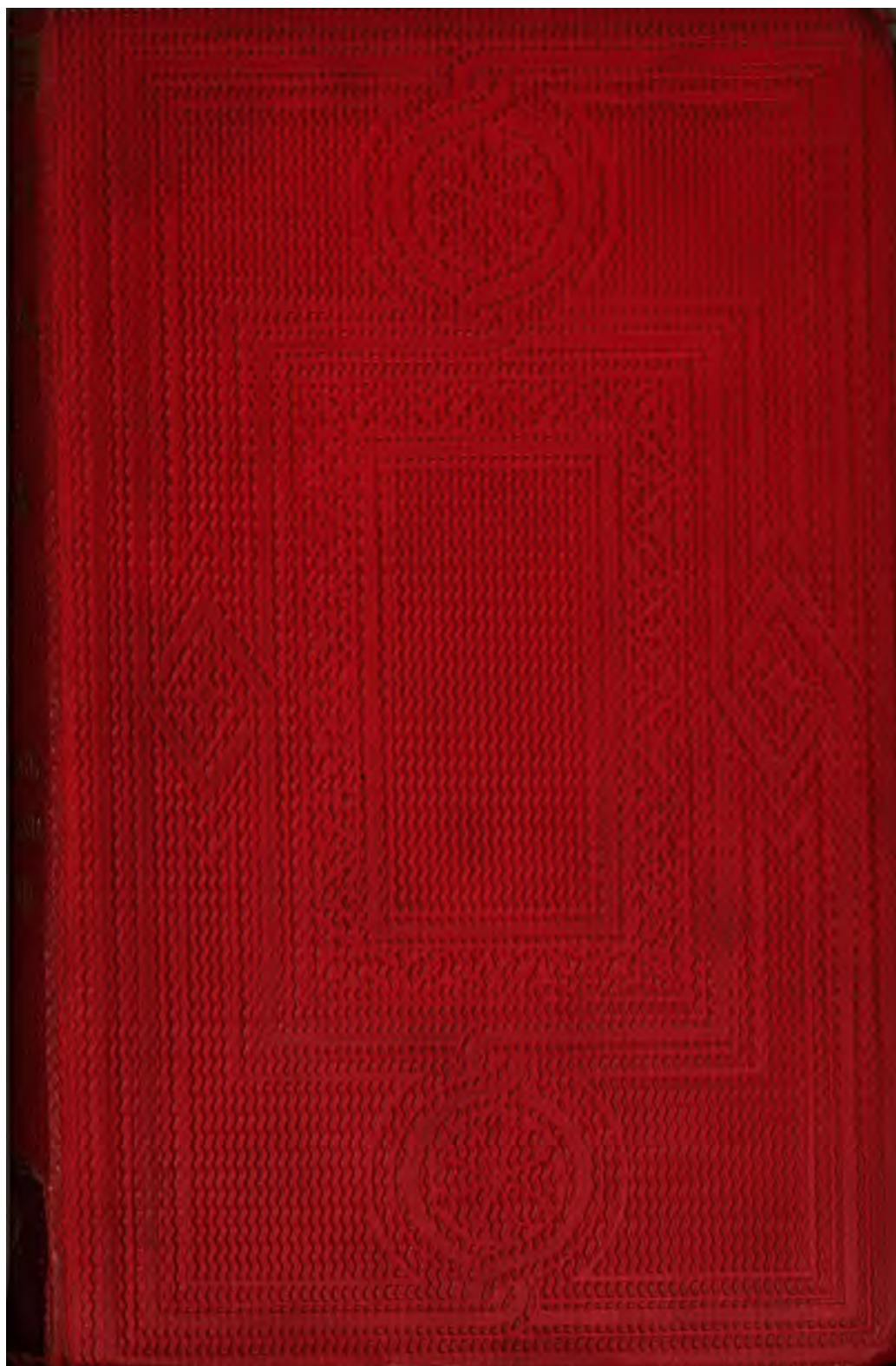
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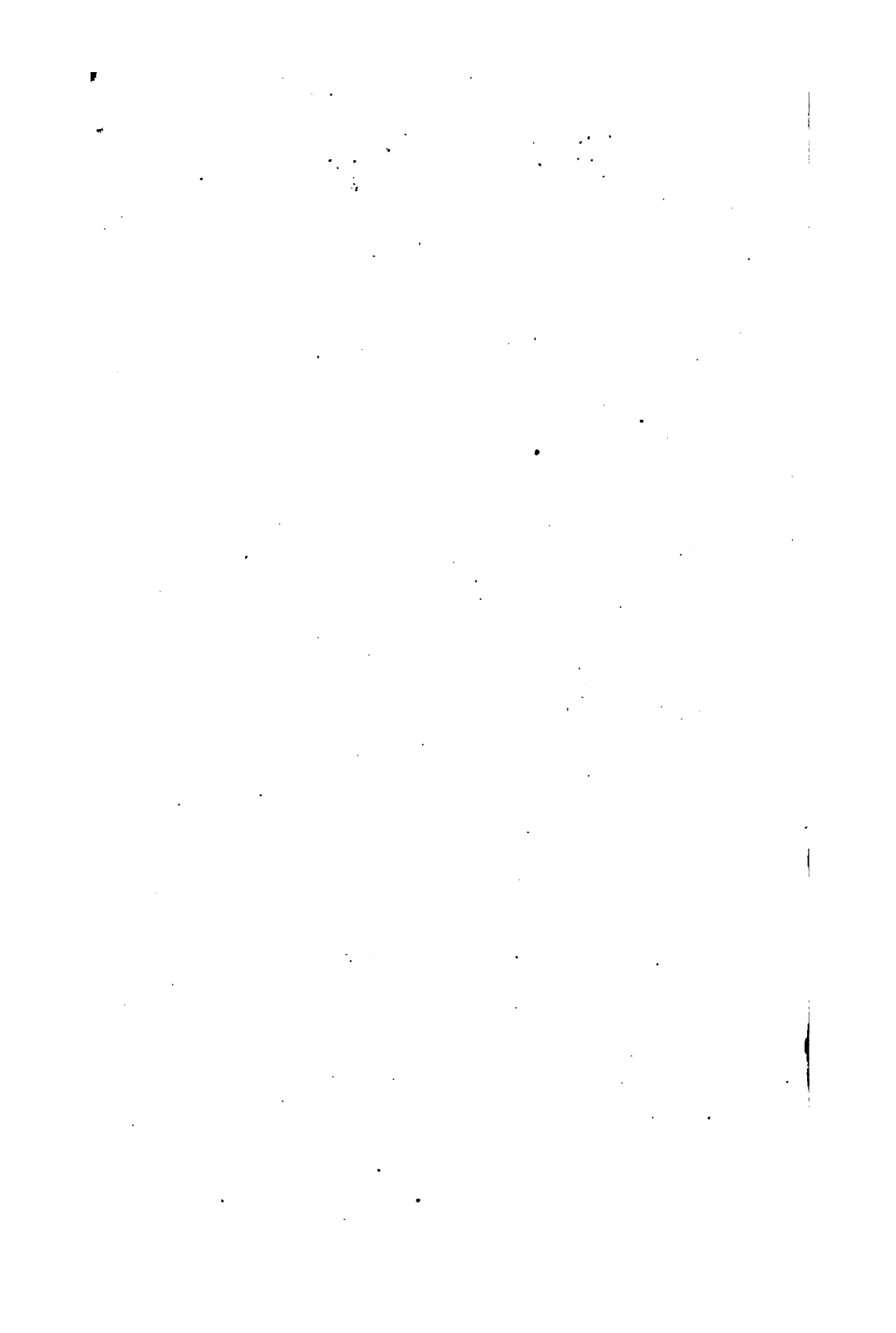
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HISTORY
OF
THE OPERA,

From its Origin in Italy to the present Time.

WITH ANECDOTES
OF THE MOST CELEBRATED COMPOSERS AND VOCALISTS OF EUROPE.

BY
SUTHERLAND EDWARDS,
AUTHOR OF "RUSSIANS AT HOME," ETC.

"QUIS TAM DULCIS SONUS QUI MEAS COMPLET AURES?"
"WHAT IS ALL THIS NOISE ABOUT?"

VOL. I.

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HISTORY OF THE OPERA.

CHAPTER I.

PREFACE, PRELUDE, PROLOGUE, INTRODUCTION, OVERTURE, ETC.—THE ORIGIN OF THE OPERA IN ITALY, AND ITS INTRODUCTION INTO GERMANY.—ITS HISTORY IN EUROPE; DIVISION OF THE SUBJECT.

It has often been said, and notably, by J. J. Rousseau, and after him, with characteristic exaggeration, by R. Wagner, that "Opera" does not mean so much a musical work, as a musical, poetical, and spectacular work all at once; that "Opera" in fact, is "the work," *par excellence*, to the production of which all the arts are necessary.* The very titles

* Wagner calls the composer of an opera "the sculptor or upholsterer;" (which is complimentary to sculptors,) and the writer of the words "the architect." I would rather say that the writer of the words produces a sketch, on which the composer paints a picture.

Since writing the above I find that the greatest of French poets describes an admirable *libretto* of his own as "*un canevas d'opéra plus ou moins bien disposé pour que l'œuvre musicale s'y superpose heureusement*;" and again, "*une trame qui ne demande pas mieux que de se dérober sous cette riche et éblouissante broderie qui s'appelle la musique*." (Preface to Victor Hugo's *Esmeralda*.)

of the earliest operas prove this notion to be incorrect. The earliest Italian plays of a mixed character, not being constructed according to the ancient rules of tragedy and comedy, were called by the general name of "Opera," the nature of the "work" being more particularly indicated by some such epithet or epithets as *regia*, *comica*, *tragica*, *scenica*, *sacra*, *esemplare*, *regia ed esemplare*, &c. ; and in the case of a lyrical drama, the words *per musica*, *scenica per musica*, *regia ed esemplare per musica*, were added, or the production was styled *opera musicale* alone. In time the mixed plays (which were imitated from the Spanish) fell into disrepute in Italy, while the title of "Opera" was still applied to lyrical dramas, but not without "musicale," or "in musica" after it. This was sufficiently vague, but people soon found it troublesome, or thought it useless, to say *opera musicale*, when opera by itself conveyed, if it did not express, their meaning, and thus dramatic works in music came to be called "Operas." Algarotte's work on the Opera (translated into French, and entitled *Essai sur l'Opéra*) is called in the original *Saggio sopra l'Opera in musica*. "Opera in music" would in the present day sound like a pleonasm, but it is as well to consider the true meaning of words, when we find them not merely perverted, but in their perverted sense made the foundation of ridiculous theories.

The Opera proceeds from the sacred musical plays of the 15th century as the modern drama proceeds

from the mediæval mysteries. Ménestrier, however, the Jesuit father, assigns to it a far greater antiquity, and considers the Song of Solomon to be the earliest Opera on record, founding his opinion on these words of St. Jérôme, translated from Origen :—*Epithalamium, libellus, id est nuptiale carmen, in modum mihi videtur dramatis a Solomone conscriptus quem cecinit instar nubentis sponsæ.**

Others see the first specimens of opera in the Greek plays; but the earliest musical dramas of modern Italy, from which the Opera of the present day is descended directly, and in an unbroken line, are “mysteries” differing only from the dramatic mysteries in so far that the dialogue in them was sung instead of being spoken. “The Conversion of St. Paul” was played in music, at Rome, in 1440. The first profane subject treated operatically, was the descent of Orpheus into hell; the music of this *Orfeo*, which was produced also at Rome, in 1480, was by Angelo Poliziano, the libretto by Cardinal Riario, nephew of Sixtus IV. The popes kept up an excellent theatre, and Clement IX. was himself the author of seven *libretti*.

At this time the great attraction in operatic representations was the scenery—a sign of infancy then, as it is a sign of decadence now. At the very beginning of the sixteenth century, Balthazar Peruzzi, the decorator of the papal theatre, had carried his

* Ménestrier, des représentations en musique, anciennes et modernes, page 23.

art to such perfection, that the greatest painters of the day were astonished at his performances. His representations of architecture and the illusions of height and distance which his knowledge of perspective enabled him to produce, were especially admired. Vasari has told us how Titian, at the Palace of la Farnesina, was so struck by the appearance of solidity given by Peruzzi to his designs in profile, that he was not satisfied, until he had ascended a ladder and touched them, that they were not actually in relief. "One can scarcely conceive," says the historian of the painters, in speaking of Peruzzi's scenic decorations, "with what ability, in so limited a space, he represented such a number of houses, palaces, porticoes, entablatures, profiles, and all with such an aspect of reality that the spectator fancied himself transported into the middle of a public square, to such a point was the illusion carried. Moreover, Balthazar, the better to produce these results, understood, in an admirable manner the disposition of light as well as all the machinery connected with theatrical changes and effects."

In 1574, Claudio Merulo, organist at St. Mark's, of Venice, composed the music of a drama by Cornelio Frangipani, which was performed in the Venetian Council Chamber in presence of Henry III. of France. The music of the operatic works of this period appears to have possessed but little if any dramatic character, and to have consisted almost exclusively of choruses in the madrigal style, which

was so successfully cultivated about the same time in England. Emilio del Cavaliere, a celebrated musician of Rome, made an attempt to introduce appropriateness of expression into these choruses, and his reform, however incomplete, attracted the attention of Giovanni Bardi, Count of Vernio. This nobleman used to assemble in his palace all the most distinguished musicians of Florence, among whom were Mei, Caccini, and Vincent Galileo, the father of the astronomer. Vincent Galileo was himself a discoverer, and helped, at the Count of Vernio's musical meetings, to invent recitative—an invention of comparative insignificance, but which in the system of modern opera plays as important a part, perhaps, as the rotation of the earth does in that of the celestial spheres.

Two other Florentine noblemen, Pietro Strozzi and Giacomo Corsi, encouraged by the example of Bardi, and determined to give the musical drama its fullest development in the new form that it had assumed, engaged Ottavio Rinuccini, one of the first poets of the period, with Peri and Caccini, two of the best musicians, to compose an opera which was entitled *Dafne*, and was performed for the first time in the Corsi Palace, at Florence, in 1597.

Dafne appears to have been the first complete opera. It was considered a masterpiece both from the beauty of the music and from the interest of the drama; and on its model the same authors composed their opera of *Euridice*, which was repre-

sented publicly at Florence on the occasion of the marriage of Henry IV. of France, with Marie de Medicis, in 1600. Each of the five acts of *Euridice* concludes with a chorus, the dialogue is in recitative, and one of the characters, "Tircis," sings an air which is introduced by an instrumental prelude.

New music was composed to the libretto of *Dafne* by Gagliano in 1608, when the opera thus rearranged was performed at Mantua; and in 1627 the same piece was translated by Opitz, "the father of the lyric stage in Germany," as he is called, set to music by Schutz, and represented at Dresden on the occasion of the marriage of the Landgrave of Hesse with the sister of John-George I., Elector of Saxony. It was not, however, until 1692 that Keiser appeared and perfected the forms of the German Opera. Keiser was scarcely nineteen years of age when he produced at the Court of Wolfenbüttel, *Ismene* and *Basilus*, the former styled a Pastoral, the latter an opera. It is said reproachfully, and as if facetiously, of a common-place German musician in the present day, that he is "of the Wolfenbüttel school," just as it is considered comic in France to taunt a singer or player with having come from Carpentras. It is curious that Wolfenbüttel in Germany, and Carpentras in France (as I shall show in the next chapter), were the cradles of Opera in their respective countries.

To return to the Opera in Italy. The earliest musical drama, then, with choruses, recitatives, airs,

and instrumental preludes was *Dafne*, by Rinuccini as librettist, and Caccini and Peri as composers; but the orchestra which accompanied this work consisted only of a harpsichord, a species of guitar called a chitarone, a lyre, and a lute. When Monteverde appeared, he introduced the modern scale, and changed the whole harmonic system of his predecessors. He at the same time gave far greater importance in his operas to the accompaniments, and increased to a remarkable extent the number of musicians in the orchestra, which under his arrangement included every kind of instrument known at the time. Many of Monteverde's instruments are now obsolete. This composer, the unacknowledged prototype of our modern cultivators of orchestral effects, made use of a separate combination of instruments to announce the entry and return of each personage in his operas; a dramatic means employed afterwards by Hoffmann in his *Undine*,* and in the present day with pretended novelty by Richard Wagner. This newest orchestral device is also the oldest. The score of Monteverde's *Orfeo*, produced in 1608, contains parts for two harpsichords, two lyres or violas with thirteen strings, ten violas, three bass violas, two double basses, a double harp (with two rows of strings), two French violins, besides guitars, organs, a flute, clarions, and even trombones. The bass violas accompanied Orpheus, the violas Eurydice, the trombones Pluto, the small organ Apollo;

* See Vol. II.

Charon, strangely enough, sang to the music of the guitar.

Monteverde, having become chapel master at the church of St. Mark, produced at Venice *Arianna*, of which *Rinuccini* had written the libretto. This was followed by other works of the same kind, which were produced with great magnificence, until the fame of the Venetian operas spread throughout Italy, and by the middle of the seventeenth century the new entertainment was established at Venice, Bologna, Rome, Turin, Naples, and Messina. Popes, cardinals and the most illustrious nobles took the Opera under their protection, and the dukes of Mantua and Modena distinguished themselves by the munificence of their patronage.

Among the most celebrated of the female singers of this period were Catarina Martinella of Rome, Archilei, Francesca Caccini (daughter of the composer of that name and herself the author of an operatic score), Adriana Baroni, of Mantua, and her daughter Leonora Baroni, whose praises have been sung by Milton in his three Latin poems "Ad Leonoram Romæ canentem."

The Italian opera, as we shall afterwards see, was introduced into France under the auspices of Cardinal Mazarin, who as the Abbé Mazarini, had visited all the principal theatres of Italy by the express command of Richelieu, and had studied their system with a view to the more perfect representation of the

cardinal-minister's tragedies. The Italian Opera he introduced on his own account, and it was, on the whole, very inhospitably received. Indeed, from the establishment of the French Opera under Cambert and his successor Lulli, in the latter half of the seventeenth century, until the end of the eighteenth, the French were unable to understand or unwilling to acknowledge the immense superiority of the Italians in everything pertaining to music. In 1752 Pergolese's *Serva Padrona* was the cause of the celebrated dispute between the partisans of French and Italian Opera, and the end of it was that *La Serva Padrona* was hissed, and the two singers who appeared in it driven from Paris.

In England the Italian Opera was introduced in the first years of the eighteenth century, and under Handel, who arrived in London in 1710, attained the greatest perfection. Since the production of Handel's last dramatic work, in 1740, the Italian Opera has continued to be represented in London with scarcely noticeable intervals until the present day, and, on the whole, with remarkable excellence.

Of English Opera a far less satisfactory account can be given. Its traditions exist by no means in an unbroken line. Purcell wrote English operas, and was far in advance of all the composers of his time, except, no doubt, those of Italy, who, we must remember were his masters, though he did not slavishly

copy them. Since then, we have had composers (for the stage, I mean) who have utterly failed; composers, like Dr. Arne, who have written Anglo-Italian operas; composers of "ballad operas," which are not operas at all; composers of imitation-operas of all kinds; and lastly, the composers of the present day, by whom the long wished-for English Opera will perhaps at last be established.

In Germany, which, since the time of Handel and Hasse, has produced an abundance of great composers for the stage, the national opera until Gluck (including Gluck's earlier works), was imitated almost entirely from that of Italy; and the Italian method of singing being the true and only method has always prevailed.

Throughout the eighteenth century, we find the great Italian singers travelling to all parts of Europe and carrying with them the operas of the best Italian masters. In each of the countries where the opera has been cultivated, it has had a different history, but from the beginning until the end of the eighteenth century, the Italian Opera flourished in Italy, and also in Germany and in England; whereas France persisted in rejecting the musical teaching of a foreign land until the utter insufficiency of her own operatic system became too evident to be any longer denied. She remained separated from the rest of Europe in a musical sense until the time of the Re-

volution, as she has since and from very different reasons been separated from it politically.

Nevertheless, the history of the Opera in France is of great interest, like the history of every other art in that country which has engaged the attention of its ingenious amateurs and critics. Only, for a considerable period it must be treated apart.

In the course of this narrative sketch, which does not claim to be a scientific history, I shall pursue, as far as possible, the chronological method; but it is one which the necessities of the subject will often cause me to depart from.

CHAPTER II.

INTRODUCTION OF THE OPERA INTO FRANCE AND ENGLAND.

French Opera not founded by Lulli.—Lulli's elevation from the kitchen to the orchestra.—Lulli, M. de Pourceaugnac, and Louis XIV. — Buffoonery rewarded. — A disreputable tenor. — Virtuous precaution of a *prima donna*. — Orthography of a stage Queen. — A cure for love.—Mademoiselle de Maupin.—A composer of sacred music.—Food for cattle.—Cambert in England.—The first English Opera.—Music under Cromwell.—Music under Charles II.—Grabut and Dryden.—Purcell.

IN a general view of the history of the Opera, the central figures would be Gluck and Mozart. Before Gluck's time the operatic art was in its infancy, and since the death of Mozart, no operas have been produced equal to that composer's masterpieces. Mozart must have commenced his *Idomeneo*, the first of his celebrated works, the very year that Gluck retired to Vienna, after giving to the Parisians his *Iphigénie en Tauride*; but, though contemporaries in the strict sense of the word, Gluck and Mozart can scarcely be looked upon as belonging to the same musical epoch. The compositions of the former, however immortal, have at least an antique cast. Those of the latter have quite a modern air; and it must appear to the

audiences of the present day that far more than twenty-three years separate *Orfeo* from *Don Giovanni*, though that is the precise interval which elapsed between the production of the opera by which Gluck, and of the one by which Mozart, is best known in this country. Gluck, after a century and a half of opera, so far surpassed all his predecessors that no work by a composer anterior to him is ever performed. Lulli wrote an *Armide*, which was followed by Rameau's *Armide*, which was followed by Gluck's *Armide*; and Monteverde wrote an *Orfeo* a hundred and fifty years before Gluck produced the *Orfeo* which was played only the other night at the Royal Italian Opera. The *Orfeo*, then, of our existing operatic repertory takes us back through its subject to the earliest of regular Italian operas, and similarly Gluck, through his *Armide* appears as the successor of Rameau, who was the successor of Lulli, who usually passes for the founder of the Opera in France,

- a country where it is particularly interesting to trace the progress of that entertainment, inasmuch as it can be observed at one establishment, which has existed continuously for two hundred years, and which, under the title of Académie Royale, Académie Nationale, and Académie Impériale (it has now gone by each of those names twice), has witnessed the production of more operatic masterpieces than any other theatre in any city in the world. To convince the reader of the truth of this latter assertion I need only remind him of the works produced at the

Académie Royale by Gluck and Piccinni immediately before the Revolution ; and of the *Masaniello* of Auber, the *William Tell* of Rossini, and the *Robert the Devil* of Meyerbeer, — all written for the said Académie within sixteen years of the termination of the Napoleonic wars. Neither Naples, nor Milan, nor Prague, nor Vienna, nor Munich, nor Dresden, nor Berlin, has individually seen the birth of so many great operatic works by different masters, though, of course, if judged by the number of great composers to whom they have given birth, both Germany and Italy must be ranked infinitely higher than France. Indeed, if we compare France with our own country, we find, it is true, that an opera in the national language was established there earlier than here, though in the first instance only as a private entertainment ; but, on the other hand, the French, until Gluck's time, had never any composers, native or adopted, at all comparable to our Purcell, who produced his *King Arthur* as far back as 1691.

Lulli is generally said to have introduced Opera into France, and, indeed, is represented in a picture, well known to Parisian opera-goers, receiving a privilege from the hands of Louis XIV. as a reward and encouragement for his services in that respect. This privilege, however, was neither deserved nor obtained in the manner supposed. Cardinal Mazarin introduced Italian Opera into Paris in 1645, when Lulli was only twelve years of age ; and the first French Opera, entitled *Akébar, Roi de Mogol*, words and

music by the Abbé Mailly, was brought out the year following in the Episcopal Palace of Carpentras, under the direction of Cardinal Bichi, Urban the Eighth's legate. Clement VII. had already appeared as a librettist, and it has been said that Urban VIII. himself recommended the importation of the Opera into France; so that the real father of the lyric stage in that country was certainly not a scullion, and may have been a Pope.

The second French Opera was *La Pastorale en musique*, words by Perrin, music by Cambert, which was privately represented at Issy; and the third *Pomone*, also by Perrin and Cambert, which was publicly performed in Paris in 1671—the year in which was produced, at the same theatre, *Psyché*, a *tragédie-ballet*, by the two greatest dramatic poets France has ever produced, Molière and Corneille. *Pomone* was the first French Opera heard by the Parisian public, and it was to the Abbé Perrin, its author, and not to Lulli, that the patent of the Royal Academy of Music was granted. A privilege for establishing an Academy of Music had been conceded a hundred years before by Charles IX. to Antoine de Baif,—the word "*Académie*" being used as an equivalent for "*Accademia*," the Italian for concert. Perrin's license appears to have been a renewal, as to form, of de Baif's, and thus originated the eminently absurd title which the chief operatic theatre of Paris has retained ever since. The Academy of Music is of course an academy in the sense in which the

Théâtre Français is a college of declamation, and the Palais Royal Theatre a school of morality; but no one need seek to justify its title because it is known to owe its existence to a confusion of terms.

Six French operas had been performed before Lulli, supported by Madame de Montespan, succeeded in depriving Perrin of his "privilege," and securing it for himself—at the very moment when Perrin and Cambert were about to bring out their *Ariane*, of which the representation was stopped. The success of Lulli's intrigue drove Cambert to London, where he was received with much favour by Charles II., and appointed director of the Court music, an office which he retained until his death. Lulli's first opera, written in conjunction with Quinault, being the seventh produced on the French stage, was *Cadmus and Hermione* (1673).

The life of the fortunate, unscrupulous, but really talented scullion, to whom is falsely attributed the honour of having founded the Opera in France, has often been narrated, and for the most part very inaccurately. Every one knows that he arrived from Italy to enter the service of Mademoiselle de Montpensier as page, and that he was degraded by that lady to the back kitchen: but it is not so generally known that he was only saved through the influence of Madame de Montespan from a shameful and horrible death on the Place de Grève, where his accomplice was actually burned and his ashes thrown to the winds. Mademoiselle de Montpensier, in one of

her letters, speaks of Lulli asking for his congé ; but it is quite certain that he was dismissed, though it would be as impossible to give a complete account of the causes of his dismissal as to publish the original of the needlessly elaborate reply attributed to a certain French general at Waterloo.* We may mention, however, that Lulli had composed a song which was a good deal sung at the court, and at which the Princess had every right to be offended. A French dramatist has made this affair of the song the subject of a very ingenious little piece, which was represented in English some years since at the Adelphi Theatre, but in which the exact nature of the objectionable composition is of course not indicated. Suffice it to say, that Lulli was discharged, and that Louis XIV., hearing the libellous air, and finding it to his taste, showed so little regard for Mademoiselle de Montpensier's feelings, as to take the young musician into his own service. There were no vacancies in the king's band, and it was, moreover, a point of etiquette that the court-fiddlers should buy their places ; so to save trouble, and, perhaps, from a suspicion that his ordinary players were a set of impostors, his majesty commissioned Lulli to form a band of his own, to which the name of "*Les petits violons du roi*" was given. The little fiddles soon became more

* Cambronne, by the way is said to have been very much annoyed at the invention of "*La garde meurt et ne se rend pas ;*" and with reason, for he didn't die and he *did* surrender.

expert musicians than the big ones, and Louis was so pleased with the little fiddle-in-chief, that he entrusted him with the superintendence of the music of his ballets. These ballets, which corresponded closely enough to our English masques, were entertainments not of dancing only, but also of vocal and instrumental music; the name was apparently derived from the Italian *ballata*, the parent of our own "ballad."

Lulli also composed music for the interludes and songs in Molière's comedies, in which he sometimes appeared himself as a singer, and even as a burlesque actor. Once, when the musical arrangements were not quite ready for a ballet, in which the king was to play four parts—the House of France, Pluto, Mars and the Sun—he replied, on receiving a command to proceed with the piece—" *Le roi est le maitre ; il peut attendre tant qu'il lui plaira.*" His majesty did not, as I have seen it stated, laugh at the facetious impertinence of his musician. On the contrary, he was seriously offended; and great was Lulli's alarm when he found that neither the House of France, nor Pluto, nor Mars, nor the Sun, would smile at the pleasantries with which, as the performance went on, he endeavoured to atone for his unbecoming speech. The wrath of the Great Monarch was not to be appeased, and Lulli's enemies already began to rejoice at his threatened downfall.

Fortunately, Molière was at Versailles. Lulli asked him at the conclusion of the ballet to announce a

performance of *M. de Pourceaugnac*, a piece which never failed to divert Louis; and it was arranged that just before the rise of the curtain Molière should excuse himself, on the score of a sudden indisposition, from appearing in the principal character. When there seemed to be no chance of *M. de Pourceaugnac* being played, Lulli, that the king might not be disappointed, nobly volunteered to undertake the part of the hero, and exerted himself in an unprecedented manner to do it justice. But his majesty, who generally found the troubles of the Limousin gentleman so amusing, on this occasion did not even smile. The great scene was about to begin; the scene in which the apothecaries, armed with their terrible weapons, attack M. de Pourceaugnac and chase him round the stage. Louis looked graver than ever. Then the comedian, as a last hope, rushed from the back of the stage to the foot lights, sprang into the orchestra, alighted on the harpsichord, and smashed it into a thousand pieces. "By this fall he rose." Probably he hurt himself, but no matter; on looking round he saw the Great Monarch in convulsions of laughter. Encouraged by his success, he climbed back through the prompter's box on to the stage; the royal mirth increased, and Lulli was now once more reinstated in the good graces of his sovereign.

Molière had a high opinion of Lulli's facetious powers. "*Fais nous rire, Baptiste,*" he would say, and it cannot have been any sort of joke that would

have excited the laughter of the greatest of comic writers. Nevertheless, he fell out with Lulli when the latter attained the "privilege" of the Opera, and, profiting by the monopoly which it secured to him, forbade the author of *Tartuffe* to introduce more than two singers in his interludes, or to employ more than six violins in his orchestra. Accordingly, Molière entrusted the composition of the music for the *Malade Imaginaire*, to Charpentier. The songs and symphonies of all his other pieces, with the exception of *Mélicerte*, were composed by Lulli.

The story of Lulli's obtaining letters of nobility through the excellence of his buffoonery in the part of the Muphti, in the *Bourgeois Gentilhomme* has often been told. This was in 1670, but once a noble, and director of the Royal Academy of Music, he showed but little disposition to contribute to the diversion of others, even by the exercise of his legitimate art. Not only did he refuse to play the violin, but he would not even have one in his house. To overcome Lulli's repugnance in this respect, Marshal de Gramont hit upon a very ingenious plan. He used to make one of his servants who possessed the gift of converting music into noise, play the violin in Lulli's presence. Upon this, the highly susceptible musician would snatch the instrument from the valet's hands, and restore the murdered melody to life and beauty; then, excited by the pleasure of producing music, he forgot all around him, and continued to play to the great delight of the marshal.

Many curious stories are told of Lafontaine's want of success as a librettist; Lulli refused three of his operas, one after the other, *Daphné*, *Astrée*, and *Acis et Galathée*—the *Acis et Galathée* set to music by Lulli being the work of Campistron. At the first representation of *Astrée*, of which the music had been written by Colasse (a composer who imitated and often plagiarised from Lulli), Lafontaine was present in a box behind some ladies who did not know him. He kept exclaiming every moment, "Detestable! detestable!"

Tired of hearing the same thing repeated so many times, the ladies at last turned round and said, "It is really not so bad. The author is a man of considerable wit; it is written by M. de la Fontaine."

"*Cela ne vaut pas le diable*," replied the librettist, "and this Lafontaine of whom you speak is an ass. I am Lafontaine, and ought to know."

After the first act he left the theatre and went into the Café Marion, where he fell asleep. One of his friends came in, and surprised to see him, said—
"M. de la Fontaine! How is this? Ought you not to be at the first performance of your opera?"

The author awoke, and said, with a yawn—"I've been; and the first act was so dull that I had not the courage to wait for the other. I admire the patience of these Parisians!"

Compare this with the similar conduct of an English humourist, Charles Lamb, who, meeting

with no greater success as a dramatist than Lafontaine, was equally astonished at the patience of the public, and remained in the pit to hiss his own farce.

Colasse, Lafontaine's composer, and Campistron, one of Lulli's librettists—when Quinault was not in the way—occasionally worked together, and with no very favourable result. Hence, mutual reproaches, each attributing the failure of the opera to the stupidity of the other. This suggested the following epigram, which, under similar circumstances, has been often imitated:—

“Entre Campistron et Colasse,
Grand débat s'émeut au Parnasse,
Sur ce que l'opéra n'a pas un sort heureux.
De son mauvais succès nul ne se croit coupable.
L'un dit que la musique est plate et misérable,
L'autre que la conduite et les vers sont affreux ;
Et le grand Apollon, toujours juge équitable,
Trouve qu'ils ont raison tous deux.”

Quinault was by far the most successful of Lulli's librettists, in spite of the contempt with which his verses were always treated by Boileau. Boileau liked Lulli's music, but when he entered the Opera, and was asked where he would sit, he used to reply, “Put me in some place where I shall not be able to hear the words.”

Lulli must have had sad trouble with his orchestra, for in his time a violinist was looked upon as merely

an adjunct to a dancing-master. There was a king of the fiddles, without whose permission no cat-gut could be scraped; and in selling his licenses to dancing-masters and the musicians of ball-rooms, the ruler of the bows does not appear to have required any proof of capacity from his clients. Even the simple expedient of shifting was unknown to Lulli's violinists, and for years after his death, to reach the C above the line was a notable feat. The pit quite understood the difficulty, and when the dreaded *démanchement* had to be accomplished, would indulge in sarcastic shouts of "*gare l'ut ! gare l'ut !*"

The violin was not in much repute in the 17th, and still less in the 16th, century. The lute was a classical instrument; the harp was the instrument of the Troubadours; but the fiddle was fit only for servants, and fiddlers and servants were classed together.

"Such a one," says Malherbe, "who seeks for his ancestors among heroes is the son of a lacquey or a fiddler."

Brantôme, relating the death of Mademoiselle de Limenil, one of the Queen's maids of honour, who expired, poor girl, to a violin accompaniment, expresses himself as follows:—

"When the hour of her death had arrived, she sent for her valet, such as all the maids of honour have; and he was called Julien, and played very well on the violin. 'Julien,' said she, 'take your violin and play to me continually, until you see me

dead, *the Defeat of the Swiss*,* as well as you are able; and when you are at the passage *All is lost*, sound it four or five times as piteously as you can; which the other did, while she herself assisted him with her voice. She recited it twice, and then turning on the other side of her pillow said to her companions, 'All is lost this time, as well I know,' and thus died."

These musical valets were as much slaves as the ancient flute players of the Roman nobles, and were bought, sold, and exchanged like horses and dogs. When their services were not required at home, masters and mistresses who were generously inclined would allow their fiddlers to go out and play in the streets on their own account.

Strange tales are told of the members of Lulli's company. Duménil, the tenor, used to steal jewellery from the soprano and contralto of the troop, and get intoxicated with the baritone. This eccentric virtuoso is said to have drunk six bottles of champagne every night he performed, and to have improved gradually until about the fifth. Duménil, after one of his voyages to England, which he visited several times, lost his voice. Then, seeing no reason why he should moderate his intemperance at all, he gave himself up unrestrainedly to drinking, and died.

Mdlle. Desmâtins, the original representative of

* "*The battle or defeat of the Swiss on the day of Marignan.*"

Armide was chiefly celebrated for her beauty, her love of good living, her corpulence, and her bad grammar. She it was who wrote the celebrated letter communicating to a friend the death of her child, "*Notre anfan ai maure, vien de boneure, le mien ai de te voire.*" Mlle. Desmâtins took so much pleasure in representing royal personages that she assumed the (theatrical) costume and demeanour of a queen in her own household, sat on a throne, and made her attendants serve her on their knees. Another vocalist, Marthe le Rochois, accused of grave flirtation with a bassoon, justified herself by showing a promise of marriage, which the gallant instrumentalist had written on the back of an ace of spades.

The Opera singers of this period were not particularly well paid, and history relates that Milles. Aubry and Verdier, being engaged for the same line of business, had to live in the same room and sleep in the same bed.

Marthe Le Rochois was fond of giving advice to her companions. "Inspire yourself with the situation," she said to Desmâtins, who had to represent Medea abandoned by Jason; "fancy yourself in the poor woman's place. If you were deserted by a lover whom you adored," added Marthe, thinking, no doubt, of the bassoon, "what should you do?" "I should look out for another," replied the ingenious girl."

But by far the most distinguished operatic actress

of this period was Mlle. de Maupin, now better known through Théophile Gauthier's scandalous, but brilliant and vigorously written romance, than by her actual adventures and exploits, which, however, were sufficiently remarkable. Among the most amusing of her escapades, were her assaults upon Duménil and Thévenard, the before-mentioned tenor and bari-tone of the Academie. Dressed in male attire she went up to the former one night in the Place des Victoires, caned him, deprived him of his watch and snuff-box, and the next day produced the trophies at the theatre just as the plundered vocalist was boasting that he had been attacked by three robbers, and had put them all to flight. She is said to have terrified the latter to such a degree that he remained three weeks hiding from her in the Palais Royal.

Mlle. de Maupin was in many respects the Lola Montes of her day, but with more beauty, more talent, more power, and more daring. When she appeared as Minerva, in Lulli's *Cadmus*, and taking off her helmet to the public, showed all her beautiful light brown hair, which hung in luxuriant tresses over her shoulders, the audience were in ecstasies of delight. With less talent, and less powers of fascination, she would infallibly have been executed for the numerous fatal duels in which she was engaged, and might even have been burnt alive for invading the sanctity of a convent at Avignon, to say nothing of her attempting to set fire to it. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that Lola Montes was the Mlle. Maupin of *her*

day; a Maupin of a century which is moderate in its passions and its vices as in other things.

Moreau, the successor of Lulli, is chiefly known as having written the music for the choruses of Racine's *Esther*, (1689). These choruses, re-arranged by Perne, were performed in 1821, at the Conservatoire of Paris, and were much applauded. Racine, in his preface to *Esther*, says, "I cannot finish this preface without rendering justice to the author of the music, and confessing frankly that his (choral) songs formed one of the greatest attractions of the piece. All connoisseurs are agreed that for a long time no airs have been heard more touching, or more suitable to the words." Nevertheless, Madame de Maintenon's special composer was not eminently religious in his habits. The musician whose hymns were sung by the daughters of Sion and of St. Cyr sought his inspiration at a tavern in the Rue St. Jacques, in company with the poet Lainez and with most of the singers and dancers of the period. No member of the Opera rode past the Cabaret de la Barre Royale without tying his horse up in the yard and going in for a moment to have a word and a glass with Moreau. Sometimes the moment became an hour, sometimes several. The horses of Létang and Favier, dancers at the Académie, after being left eight hours in the court-yard without food, gnawed through their bridles, and, looking no doubt for the stable, found their way into a bed-room, where they devoured the contents of a dilapidated straw mattress. "We must

all live," said Lainez, when he saw a mattress charged for among the items of the repast, and he hastened to offer the unfortunate animals a ration of wine.

When Cambert arrived in London he found Charles II. and his Court fully disposed to patronise any sort of importation from France. Naturally, then, the founder of French Opera was well received. Even Lock, in many of his pieces, had imitated the French style; and though he had been employed to compose the music for the public entry of Charles II., at the Restoration, and was afterwards appointed composer in ordinary to His Majesty, Cambert, immediately on his arrival, was made master of the king's band; and two years afterwards an English version of his *Ariadne* was produced. "You knew Cambert," says de Vizé, in *Le Mercure Galant*; "he has just died in London (1677), where he received many favours from the King of England and from the greatest noblemen of his Court, who had a high opinion of his genius. What they have seen of his works has not belied the reputation he had acquired in France. It is to him we owe the establishment of the operas that are now represented. The music of those of *Pomona*, and of the *Pains and Pleasures of Love*, is by him, and since that time we have had no recitative in France that has appeared new." In several English books, Grabut, who accompanied

Cambert to England, is said to have arranged the music of *Ariadne*, and even to have composed it; but this is manifestly an error. This same Grabut wrote the music to Dryden's celebrated political opera *Albion and Albanus*, which was performed at the Duke's Theatre in 1685, and of which the representations were stopped by the news of Monmouth's invasion. Purcell, who was only fifteen years of age when *Ariadne* was produced, was now twenty-six, and had written a great deal of admirable dramatic music. Probably the public thought that to him, and not to the Frenchman, might have been confided the task of setting *Albion and Albanus*, for in the preface to that work Dryden says, as if apologetically, that "during the rehearsal the king had publicly declared more than once, that the composition and choruses were more just and more beautiful than any he had heard in England." Then after a warm commendation of Grabut Dryden adds, "This I say, not to flatter him, but to do him right; because among some English musicians, and their scholars, who are sure to judge after them, the imputation of being a Frenchman is enough to make a party who maliciously endeavour to decry him. But the knowledge of Latin and Italian poets, both of which he possesses, besides his skill in music, and his being acquainted with all the performances of the French operas, adding to these the good sense to which he is born, have raised him to a degree above any man who shall pretend to be his rival on our

stage. When any of our countrymen excel him, I shall be glad, for the sake of Old England, to be shown my error: in the meantime, let virtue be commended, though in the person of a stranger."

Neither Grabut nor Cambert was the first composer who produced a complete opera in England. During the Commonwealth, in 1656, Sir William Davenant had obtained permission to open a theatre for the performance of operas, in a large room, at the back of Rutland House, in the upper end of Aldersgate Street; and, long before, the splendid court masques of James I. and Charles I. had given opportunities for the development of recitative, which was first composed in England by an Italian, named Lanieri, an eminent musician, painter and engraver. The Opera had been established in Italy since the beginning of the century, and we have seen that in 1607, Monteverde wrote his *Orfeo* for the court of Mantua. But it was still known in England and France only through the accounts, respectively, of Evelyn and of St. Evrémond.

The first English opera produced at Sir William Davenant's theatre, the year of its opening, was *The Siege of Rhodes*, made a representation by the art of perspective in scenes, and the story sung in recitative music." There were five changes of scene, according to the ancient dramatic distinctions made for time, and there were seven performers. The part of "Solyman" was taken by Captain Henry Cook, that of "Ianthé" by Mrs. Coleman, who appears to

have been the first actress on the English stage—in the sense in which Heine was the first poet of his century (having been born on the 1st of January, 1800)* and Beaumarchais the first poet in Paris (to a person entering the city from the Porte St. Antoine).† The remaining five parts were “doubled.” That of the “Admiral” was taken by Mr. Peter Rymon, and Matthew Lock, the future composer of the music to *Macbeth*; that of “Mustapha,” by Mr. Thomas Blagrave, and Henry Purcell, the father of the composer of *King Arthur*, and himself an accomplished musician. The vocal music of the first and fifth “entries” or acts, was composed by Henry Lawes; that of the second and third, by Captain Henry Cook, afterwards master of the children of the Chapel Royal; that of the fourth, by Lock. The instrumental music was by Dr. Charles Coleman and George Hudson, and was performed by an orchestra of six musicians.

The first English opera then was produced, ten years later than the first French opera; but the *Siege of Rhodes* was performed publicly, whereas, it was not until fifteen years afterwards (1671) that the first public performance of a French opera (Cambert's *Pomone*) took place. Ordinances for the suppression of stage plays had been in force in England since 1642, and in 1643, a tract was printed under the title of *The Actor's Remonstrance*, showing to what distress the musicians of the theatre

* This was Heine's own joke.

† And this, Beaumarchais's.

had been already reduced. The writer says, "But musike that was held so delectable and precious that they scorned to come to a tavern under twenty shillings salary for two hours, now wander with their instruments under their cloaks (I mean such as have any) to all houses of good fellowship, saluting every room where there is company with 'will you have any musike, gentlemen.'" In 1648, moreover, a provost-marshal was appointed with power to seize upon all ballad singers, and to suppress stage plays.

Nevertheless, Oliver Cromwell was a great lover of music. He is said to have "entertained the most skilful in that science in his pay and family;" and it is known that he engaged Hingston, a celebrated musician, formerly in the service of Charles, at a salary of one hundred a-year—the Hingston, at whose house Sir Roger l'Estrange was playing, and continued to play when Oliver entered the room, which gained for this *virtuoso* the title of "Oliver's fiddler." Antony à Wood, also tells a story of Cromwell's love of music. James Quin, one of the senior students of Christ Church, with a bass voice, "very strong and exceeding trouling," had been turned out of his place by the visitors, but, "being well acquainted with some great men of those times that loved music, they introduced him into the company of Oliver Cromwell, the Protector, who loved a good voice and instrumental music well. He heard him sing with great delight, liquored him with sack, and in conclusion, said, 'Mr. Quin, you

have done well, what shall I do for you?' To which Quin made answer, 'That your highness would be pleased to restore me to my student's place,' which he did accordingly." But the best proof that can be given of Oliver Cromwell's love for music is the simple fact that, under his government, and with his special permission, the Opera was founded in this country.

We have seen that in Charles II's reign, the court reserved its patronage almost exclusively for French music, or music in the French style. When Cambert arrived in London, our Great Purcell (born, 1659) was still a child. He produced his first opera, *Dido and Æneas*, the year of Cambert's death (1677); but, although, in the meanwhile, he wrote a quantity of vocal and instrumental music of all kinds, and especially for the stage, it was not until after the death of Charles that he associated himself with Dryden in the production of those musical dramas (not operas in the proper sense of the word) by which he is chiefly known.

In 1690, Purcell composed music for *The Tempest*, altered and shamefully disfigured by Dryden and Davenant.

In 1691, *King Arthur*, which contains Purcell's finest music, was produced with immense success. The war-song of the Britons, *Come if you Dare*, and the concluding duet and chorus, *Britons strike Home*, have survived the rest of the work. The former piece in particular is well known to con-

cert-goers of the present day, from the excellent singing of Mr. Sims Reeves. Purcell died at the age of thirty-six, the age at which Mozart and Raphael were lost to the world, and has not yet found a successor. He was not only the most original, and the most dramatic, but also the most thoroughly English of our native composers. In the dedication of the music of the *Prophetess* to the Duke of Somerset, Purcell himself says, "Music is yet but in its nonage, a forward child, which gives hope of what it may be hereafter in England, when the masters of it shall find more encouragement. 'Tis now learning Italian, which is its best master, and studying a little of the French air to give it somewhat more of gaiety and fashion." Here Purcell spoke in all modesty, for though his style may have been formed in some measure on French models, "there is," says Dr. Burney, "a latent power and force in his expression of English words, whatever be the subject, that will make an unprejudiced native of this island feel more than all the elegance, grace and refinement of modern music, less happily applied, can do; and this pleasure is communicated to us, not by the symmetry or rhythm of modern melody, but by his having tuned to the true accents of our mother tongue, those notes of passion which an inhabitant of this island would breathe in such situations as the words describe. And these indigenous expressions of passion Purcell had the power to enforce by the energy of modulation, which, on some occasions, was

bold, affecting and sublime. Handel," he adds, "who flourished in a less barbarous age for his art, has been acknowledged Purcell's superior in many particulars; but in none more than the art and grandeur of his choruses, the harmony and texture of his organ fugues, as well as his great style of concertos; the ingenuity of his accompaniments to his songs and choruses; and even in the general melody of the airs themselves; yet, in the accent, passion and expression of *English words*, the vocal music of Purcell is, sometimes, to my feelings, as superior to Handel's as an original poem to a translation."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE NATURE OF THE OPERA, AND ITS MERITS AS COMPARED WITH OTHER FORMS OF THE DRAMA.

Opera admired for its unintelligibility. — The use of words in opera. — An inquisitive amateur. — New version of a chorus in *Robert le Diable*. — Strange readings of the *Credo* by two chapel masters. — Dramatic situations and effects peculiar to the Opera. — Pleasantries directed against the Opera; their antiquity and harmlessness. — *Les Opéras* by St. Evrémonde. — Beaumarchais's *mot*. — Addison on the Italian Opera in England. — Swift's epigram. — Béranger on the decline of the drama. — What may be seen at the Opera.

WHEN Sir William Davenant obtained permission from Cromwell to open his theatre for the performance of operas, Antony à Wood wrote that, "Though Oliver Cromwell had now prohibited all other theatrical representations, he allowed of this because being in an unknown language it could not corrupt the morals of the people." Thereupon it has been imagined that Antony à Wood must have supposed Sir William Davenant's performances to have been in the Italian tongue, as if he could not have regarded music as an unknown language, and have concluded that a drama conducted in music would for that reason be unintelligible. Nevertheless, in the present day we have a

censor who refuses to permit the representation of *La Dame aux Camélias* in English, or even in French,* but who tolerates the performance of *La Traviata*, (which, I need hardly say, is the *Dame aux Camélias* set to music) in Italian, and, I believe, even in English; thinking, no doubt, like Antony à Wood, that in an operatic form it cannot be understood, and therefore cannot corrupt the morals of the people. Since Antony à Wood's time a good deal of stupid, unmeaning verse has been written in operas, and sometimes when the words have not been of themselves unintelligible, they have been rendered nearly so by the manner in which they have been set to music, to say nothing of the final obscurity given to them by the imperfect enunciation of the singers. The mere fact, however, of a dramatic piece being performed in music does not make it unintelligible, but, on the contrary, increases the sphere of its intelligibility, giving it a more universal interest and rendering it an entertainment appreciable by persons of all countries. This in itself is not much to boast of, for the entertainment of the *ballet* is independent of language to a still greater extent; and *La Gitana* or *Esmeralda* can be as well understood by an Englishman at the Opera House of Berlin or of Moscow as at Her Majesty's Theatre in London; while perhaps the most univer-

* *La Dame Camélias* was to have been played at the St. James's Theatre last summer, with Madame Doche in the principal part; but its representation was forbidden by the licenser.

sally intelligible drama ever performed is that of Punch, even when the brief dialogue which adorns its pantomime is inaudible.

Opera is *music in a dramatic form*; and people go to the theatre and listen to it as if it were so much prose. They have even been known to complain during or after the performance that they could not hear the words, as if it were through the mere logical meaning of the words that the composer proposed to excite the emotion of the audience. The only pity is that it is necessary in an opera to have words at all, but it is evident that a singer could not enter into the spirit of a dramatic situation if he had a mere string of meaningless syllables or any sort of inappropriate nonsense to utter. He must first produce an illusion on himself, or he will produce none on the audience, and he must, therefore, fully inspire himself with the sentiment, logical as well as musical, of what he has to sing. Otherwise, all we want to know about the words of *Casta diva* (to take examples from the most popular, as also one of the very finest of Italian operas) is that it is a prayer to a goddess; of the Druids' chorus, that it is chorus of Druids; of the trio, that "Norma" having confronted "Pollio" with "Adalgisa," is reproaching him indignantly and passionately with his perfidy; of the duet that "Norma" is confiding her children to "Adalgisa's" care; of the scene with "Pollio," that "Norma" is again reproaching him, but in a different spirit, with sadness and bitterness,

and with the compressed sorrow of a woman who is wounded to the heart and must soon die. I may be in error, however, for though I have seen *Norma* fifty times, I have never examined the *libretto*, and of the whole piece know scarcely more than the two words which I have already paraded before the public — "*Casta Diva*."

One night, at the Royal Italian Opera, when Mario was playing the part of the "Duke of Mantua" in *Rigoletto*, and was singing the commencement of the duet with "Gilda," a man dressed in black and white like every one else, said to me gravely, "I do not understand Italian. Can you tell me what he is saying to her?"

"He is telling her that he loves her," I answered briefly.

"What is he saying now?" asked this inquisitive amateur two minutes afterwards.

"He is telling her that he loves her," I repeated.

"Why, he said that before!" objected this person who had apparently come to the opera with the view of gaining some kind of valuable information from the performers. Poor Bosio was the "Gilda," but my horny-eared neighbour wondered none the less that the Duke could not say "I love you," in three words.

"He will say it again," I answered, "and then she will say it, and then they will say it together; indeed, they will say nothing else for the next five

minutes, and when you hear them exclaim 'addio' with one voice, and go on repeating it, it will still mean the same thing."

What benighted amateur was this who wanted to know the words of a beautiful duet; and is there much difference between such a one and the man who would look at the texture of a canvas to see what the painting on it was worth?

Let it be admitted that as a rule no opera is intelligible without a libretto; but is a drama always intelligible without a play-bill? A libretto, for general use, need really be no larger than an ordinary programme; and it would be a positive advantage if it contained merely a sketch of the plot with the subject, and perhaps the first line of all the principal songs.

Then the foolish amateur would not run the risk of having his attention diverted from the music by the words, and would be more likely to give himself up to the enjoyment of the opera in a rational and legitimate manner. Another advantage of keeping the words from the public would be, that composers, full of the grossest prose, but priding themselves on their fancy, would at last see the inutility as well as the pettiness of picking out one particular word in a line, and "illustrating" it: thus imitating a sound when their aim should be to depict a sentiment. Even the illustrious Purcell has sinned in this respect, and Meyerbeer, innumerable times, though always displaying remarkable ingenuity, and as much good taste as is compatible with an error against

both taste and reason. It is a pity that great musicians should descend to such anti-poetical, and, indeed, nonsensical trivialities ; but when inferior ones are unable to let a singer wish she were a bird, without imitating a bird's chirruping on the piccolo, or allude in the most distant manner to the trumpet's sound, without taking it as a hint to introduce a short flourish on that instrument, I cannot help thinking of those literal-minded pictorial illustrators who follow a precisely analogous process, and who, for example, in picturing the scene in which "Macbeth" exclaims—"Throw physic to the dogs," would represent a man throwing bottles of medicine to a pack of hounds. What a treat, by the way, it would be to hear a setting of Othello's farewell to war by a determined composer of imitative picturesque music ! How "ear-piercing" would be his fifes ! How "spirit-stirring" his drums.

The words of an opera ought to be good, and yet need not of necessity be heard. They should be poetical that they may inspire first the composer and afterwards the singer ; and they should be rythmical and sonorous in order that the latter may be able to sing them with due effect. Above all they ought not to be ridiculous, lest the public should hear them and laugh at the music, just where it was intended that it should affect them to tears. Everything ought to be good at the opera down to the rosin of the fiddlers, and including the words of the libretto. Even the chorus should have tolerable verses to sing, though no one

would be likely ever to hear them. Indeed, it is said that at the Grand Opera of Paris, by a tradition now thirty years old, the opening chorus in *Robert le Diable* is always sung to those touching lines—which I confess I never heard on the other side of the orchestra :—

La sou- | pe aux choux | se fait dans la mar | -mite
 Dans la | marmi- | -te on fait la soupe aux | choux.

I have said nothing about the duty of the composer in selecting his libretto and setting it to music, but of course if he be a man of taste he will not willingly accept a collection of nonsense verses. English composers, however, have not much choice in this respect, and all we can ask of them is that they will do their best with what they have been able to obtain; not indulging in too many repetitions, and not tiring the singer and provoking such of the audience as may wish to “catch” the words by setting more than half a dozen notes to the same monosyllable especially if the monosyllable occurs in the middle of a line, and the vowel *e*, or worse still, *i*, in the middle of the monosyllable. One of our most eminent composers, Mr. Vincent Wallace, has given us a striking example of the fault I am speaking of in his well-known trio—“Turn on old Time thy hour-glass” (*Maritana*) in which, according to the music, the scanning of the first half line is as follows :—

Tŭrn ōn | ōld Tī | ŷ-ī || ŷ-ŷ-ŷ-ime | &c.

To be sure Time is infinite, but seven sounds

do not convey the notion of infinity; and even if they did, it would not be any the more pleasant for a singer to have to take a five note leap, and then execute five other notes on a vowel which cannot be uttered without closing the throat. If I had been in Mr. Vincent Wallace's place, I should, at all events, have insisted on Mr. Fitzball making one change. Instead of "Old Time," he should have inserted "Old Parr."

Tŭrn ōn | ǒld Pā- | ă-ă || ă-ă-ă-arr | &c.,

would not have been more intelligible to the audience than—"Turn on old Ti-i-i-i-i-ime, &c., and it would have been a thousand times easier to sing. Nor in spite of the little importance I attach to the phraseology of the libretto when listening to "music in a dramatic form," would I, if I were a composer, accept such a line as—

"When the proud land of Poland was ploughed by the hoof,"

with a suspension of sense after the word hoof. No; the librettist might take his hoof elsewhere. It should not appear in *my* Opera; at least, not in lieu of a plough. Mr. Balfe should tell such poets to keep such ploughs for themselves.

Sic vos *pro* vobis fertis aratra boves,

he might say to them.

The singer ought certainly to understand what he is singing, and still more certainly should the composer understand what he is composing; but the sight of Latin reminds me that both have sometimes

failed to do so, and from no one's fault but their own. Jomelli used to tell a story of an Italian chapel-master, who gave to one of his solo singers the phrase *Genitum non factum*, to which the chorus had to reply *Factum non genitum*. This transposition seemed ingenious and picturesque to the composer, and suited a contrast of rhythm which he had taken great pains to produce. It was probably due only to the bad enunciation of the choristers that he was not burned alive.

Porpora, too, narrowly escaped the terrors of the inquisition; and but for his avowed and clearly-proved ignorance of Latin would have made a bad end of it, for a similar, though not quite so ludicrous a blunder as the one perpetrated by Jomelli's friend. He had been accustomed to add *non* and *si* to the verses of his libretto when the music required it, and in setting the creed found it convenient to introduce a *non*. This novel version of the Belief commenced—*Credo, non credo, non credo in Deum*, and it was well for Porpora that he was able to convince the inquisitors of his inability to understand it.

Another chapel-master of more recent times is said, in composing a mass, to have given a delightfully pastoral character to his "Agnus Dei." To him "a little learning" had indeed proved "a dangerous thing." He had, somehow, ascertained that "agnus" meant "lamb," and had forthwith gone to work with pipe and cornemuse to give appropriate "picturesqueness" to his accompaniments.

Besides accusations of unintelligibility and of *contra-sense* (as for instance when a girl sentenced to death sings in a lively strain), the Opera has been attacked as essentially absurd, and it is satisfactory to know that these attacks date from its first introduction into England and France. To some it appears monstrous that men and women should be represented on the stage singing, when it is notorious that in actual life they communicate in the speaking voice. Opera was declared to be unnatural as compared with drama. In other words, it was thought natural that Desdemona should express her grief in melodious verse, but unnatural that she should do so in pure melody. (For the sake of the comparison I must suppose Rossini's *Otello* to have been written long before its time). Persons, with any pretence to reason, have long ceased to urge such futile objections against a delightful entertainment which, as I shall endeavour to show, is in some respects the finest form the drama has assumed. Gresset answered these music-haters well in his *Discours sur l'harmonie*.—"After all," he says, "if we study nature do we not find more fidelity to appropriateness at the Opera than on the tragic stage where the hero speaks the language of declamatory poetry? Has not harmony always been much better able than simple declamation to imitate the true tones of the passions, deep sighs, sobs, bursts of grief, languishing tenderness, interjections of despair, the inflexions of pathos, and all the energy of the heart?"

For the sake of enjoying the pleasures of music and of the drama in combination, we must adopt certain conventions, and must assume that song is the natural language of the men and women that we propose to show in our operas; as we assume in tragedy that they all talk in verse, in comedy that they are all witty and yet are perpetually giving one another opportunities for repartee; in the ballet that they all dance and are unable to speak at all. The form is nothing. Give us the true expression of natural emotion and all the rest will seem natural enough. Only it would be as well to introduce as many dancing characters and dancing situations as possible in the *ballet*—and to remember in particular that Roman soldiers could not with propriety figure in one; for a ballet on the subject of “*Les Horaces*” was once actually produced in France, in which the Horatii and the Curiatii danced a double *pas de trois*; and so in the tragedy the chief passages ought not to be London coal-heavers or Parisian water-carriers; and similarly in the Opera, scenes and situations should be avoided which in no way suggest singing.

And let me now inform the ignorant opponents of the Opera, that there are certain grand dramatic effects attainable on the lyric stage, which, without the aid of music, could not possibly be produced. Music has often been defined; here is a new definition of it. It is *the language of masses*—the only language that masses can speak and be understood. On the old stage a crowd could not cry “Down with

the tyrant!" or "We will!" or even "Yes," and "No," with any intelligibility. There is some distance between this state of things and the "Blessing of the daggers" in the *Huguenots*, or the prayer of the Israelites in *Moses*. On the old stage we could neither have had the prayer (unless it were recited by a single voice, which would be worse than nothing) before the passage, nor the thanksgiving, which, in the Opera, is sung immediately after the Red Sea has been crossed; but above all we could not obtain the sublime effect produced by the contrast between the two songs; the same song, and yet how different! the difference between minor and major, between a psalm of humble supplication and a hymn of jubilant gratitude. This is the change of key at which, according to Stendhal, the women of Rome fainted in such numbers. It cannot be heard without emotion, even in England, and we do not think any one, even a professed enemy of Opera, would ask himself during the performance of the prayer in *Mosé*, whether it was natural or not that the Israelites should sing either before or after crossing the Red Sea.

Again, how could the animation of the market scene in *Masaniello* be rendered so well as by means of music? In concerted pieces, moreover, the Opera possesses a means of dramatic effect quite as powerful and as peculiar to itself as its choruses. The finest situation in *Rigoletto* (to take an example from one of the best known operas of the day) is that

in which the quartet occurs. Here, three persons express simultaneously the different feelings which are excited in the breast of each by the presence of a fourth in the house of an assassin, while the cause of all this emotion is gracefully making love to one of the three, who is the assassin's sister. The amorous fervour of the "Duke, the careless gaiety of "Maddalena," the despair of "Gilda," the vengeful rage of "Rigoletto," are all told most dramatically in the combined songs of the four personages named, while the spectator derives an additional pleasure from the art by which these four different songs are blended into harmony. A magnificent quartet, of which, however, the model existed long before in *Don Giovanni*.

All this is, of course, very unnatural. It would be so much more natural that the "Duke of Mantua" should first make a long speech to "Maddalena;" that "Maddalena" should then answer him; that afterwards both should remain silent while "Gilda," of whose presence outside the tavern they are unaware, sobs forth her lamentations at the perfidy of her betrayer; and that finally the "Duke," "Maddalena," and "Gilda," by some inexplicable agreement, should not say a word while "Rigoletto" is congratulating himself on the prospect of being speedily revenged on the libertine who has robbed him of his daughter. In the old drama, perfect sympathy between two lovers can scarcely be expressed (or rather symbolized) so vividly as through the "*ensemble*" of the

duet, where the two voices are joined so as to form but one harmony. We are sometimes inclined to think that even the balcony duet between "Romeo" and "Juliet" ought to be in music; and certainly no living dramatist could render the duet in music between "Valentine and Raoul" adequately into either prose or verse. Talk of music destroying the drama,—why it is from love of the drama that so many persons go to the opera every night.

But is it not absurd to hear a man say, "Good morning," "How do you do?" in music? Most decidedly; and therefore ordinary, common-place, and trivial remarks should be excluded from operas, as from poetical dramas and from poetry of all kinds except comic and burlesque verse. It was not reserved for the unmusical critics of the present day to discover that it would be grotesque to utter such a phrase as "Give me my boots," in recitative, and that such a line as "Waiter, a cutlet nicely browned," could not be advantageously set to music. All this sort of humour was exhausted long ago by Haute-roche, in his *Crispin Musicien*, which was brought out in Paris three years after the establishment of the Académie Royale de Musique, and revived in the time of Rameau (1735) by Palaprat, in his *Concert Ridicule* and *Ballet Extravagant* (1689—90), of which the author afterwards said that they were "the source of all the badinage that had since been applauded in more than twenty comedies; that is to say, the interminable pleasantries on the subject of

the Opera;" and by St. Evrémond, in his comedy entitled *Les Opéras*, which he wrote during his residence in London.

In St. Evrémond's piece, which was published but not played, "Chrisotine" is, so to speak, opera-struck. She thinks of nothing but Lulli, or "Baptiste," as she affectionately calls him, after the manner of Louis XVI. and his Court; sings all day long, and in fact has altogether abandoned speech for song. "Perrette," the servant, tells "Chrisotine" that her father wishes to see her. "Why disturb me at my songs," replies the young lady, singing all the time. The attendant complains to the father, that "Chrisotine" will not answer her in ordinary spoken language, and that she sings about the house all day long. "Chrisotine" corroborates "Perrette's" statement, by addressing a little *cavatina* to her parent, in which she protests against the harshness of those who would hinder her from singing the tender loves of "Hermione" and "Cadmus."

"Speak like other people, Chrisotine," exclaims old "Chrisard," or I will issue such an edict against operas that they shall never be spoken of again where I have any authority."

"My father, Baptiste; opera, my duty to my parents; how am I to decide between you?" exclaims the young girl, with a tragic indecision as painful as that of Arnold, the son of Tell, hesitating between his Matilda and his native land.

"You hesitate between Baptiste and your father,"

cries the old gentleman. "*O tempora! O mores!*" (only in French).

"Tender mother! Cruel father! and you, O Cadmus! Unhappy Cadmus! I shall see you no more," sings "Chrisotine;" and soon afterwards she adds, still singing, that she "would rather die than speak like the vulgar. It is a new fashion at the court (she continues), and since the last opera no one speaks otherwise than in song. When one gentleman meets another in the morning, it would be grossly impolite not to sing to him:—'*Monsieur comment vous portez vous?*' to which the other would reply—'*Je me porte à votre service.*'

"FIRST GENTLEMAN.—'*Après diner, que ferons nous?*'

"SECOND GENTLEMAN.—'*Allons voir la belle Clarisse.*'

"The most ordinary things are sung in this manner, and in polite society people don't know what it means to speak otherwise than in music."

Chrisard.—"Do people of quality sing when they are with ladies?"

Chrisotine.—"Sing! sing! I should like to see a man of the world endeavour to entertain company with mere talk in the old style. He would be looked upon as one of a by-gone period. The servants would laugh at him."

Chrisard.—"And in the town?"

Chrisotine.—"All persons of any importance imitate the court. It is only in the Rue St. Denis and St.

Honoré and on the Bridge of Notre Dame that the old custom is still kept up. There people buy and sell without singing. But at Gauthier's, at the Orangery; at all the shops where the ladies of the court buy dresses, ornaments and jewels, all business is carried on in music, and if the dealers did not sing their goods would be confiscated. People say that a severe edict has been issued to that effect. They appoint no Provost of Trade now unless he is a musician, and until M. Lulli has examined him to see whether he is capable of understanding and enforcing the rules of harmony."

The above scene, be it observed, is not the work of an ignorant detractor of opera, of a brute insensible to the charms of music, but is the production of St. Evrémond, one of the very first men, on our side of the Alps, who called attention to the beauties of the new musical drama, just established in Italy, and which, when he first wrote on the subject, had not yet been introduced into France. St. Evrémond had too much sense to decry the Opera on account of such improbabilities as must inevitably belong to every form of the drama—which is the expression of life, but which need not for that reason be restricted exclusively to the language of speech, any more than tragedy need be confined to the diction of prose, or comedy to the inane platitudes of ordinary conversation. At all events, there is no novelty, and above all no wit, in repeating seriously the pleasantries of St. Evrémond, which, we repeat,

were those of a man who really loved the object of his good-natured and agreeable raillery.

Indeed, most of the men who have written things against the Opera that are still remembered have liked the Opera, and have even been the authors of operas themselves. "*Aujourd'hui ce qui ne vaut pas la peine d'être dit on le chante*," is said by the Figaro of Beaumarchais—of Beaumarchais, who gave lessons in singing and on the harpsichord to Louis XV.'s daughters, who was an enthusiastic admirer of Gluck's operas, and who wrote specially for that composer the libretto of *Tarare*, which, however, was not set to music by him, but by Salieri, Gluck's favourite pupil. Beaumarchais knew well enough—and *Tarare* in a negative manner proves it—that not only "what is not worth the trouble of saying" cannot be sung, but that very often such trivialities as can with propriety be spoken in a drama would, set to music, produce a ludicrous effect. Witness the lines in St. Evrémond's *Les Opéras*—

"*Monsieur comment vous portez vous?*"

"*Je me porte à votre service.*"—

which might form part of a comedy, but which in an opera would be absurd, and would therefore not be introduced into one, except by a foolish librettist, (who would for a certainty get hissed), or by a wit like St. Evrémond, wishing to amuse himself by exaggerating to a ridiculous point the latest fashionable mania of the day.

Addison's admirably humorous articles on Italian

Opera in the *Spectator* are often spoken of by musicians as ill-natured and unjust, and are ascribed— unjustly and even meanly, as it seems to me—to the author's annoyance at the failure of his *Rosamond*, which had been set to music by an incapable person named Clayton. Addison could afford to laugh at the ill-success of his *Rosamond*, as La Fontaine laughed at that of *Astrée*; and to assert that his excellent pleasantries on the subject of Italian Opera, then newly established in London, had for their origin the base motives usually imputed to him by musicians, is to give any one the right to say of *them* that this one abuses modern Italian music, which the public applaud, because his own English music has never been tolerated or that that one expresses the highest opinion of English composers because he himself composes and is an Englishman. To impute such motives would be to assume, as is assumed in the case of Addison, that no one blames except in revenge for some personal loss, or praises except in the hope of some personal gain. And after all, what *has* Addison said against the Opera, an entertainment which he certainly enjoyed, or he would not have attended it so often or have devoted so many excellent papers to it? Let us turn to the *Spectator* and see.

Italian Opera was introduced into England at the beginning of the 18th century, the first work performed entirely in the Italian language being *Almahide*, of which the music is attributed to Buononcini,

and which was produced in 1710, with Valentini, Nicolini, Margarita de l'Epine, Cassani and "Signora Isabella," in the principal parts. Previously, for about three years, it had been the custom for Italian and English vocalists to sing each in their own language. "The king,* or hero of the play," says Addison, "generally spoke in Italian, and his slaves answered him in English; the lover frequently made his court, and gained the heart of his princess in a language which she did not understand. One would have thought it very difficult to have carried on dialogues in this manner without an interpreter between the persons that conversed together; but this was the state of the English stage for about three years.

"At length, the audience got tired of understanding half the opera, and, therefore, to ease themselves entirely of the fatigue of thinking, have so ordered it at present, that the whole opera is performed in an unknown tongue. We no longer understand the language of our own stage, insomuch, that I have often been afraid, when I have seen our Italian performers chattering in the vehemence of action, that they have been calling us names and abusing us among themselves; but I hope, since we do put such entire confidence in them, they will not talk against us before our faces, though they may do it with the same safety as if it were behind our backs. In the meantime, I cannot forbear thinking how naturally an historian who writes two or three hundred years

* *Spectator*, No. 18.

hence, and does not know the taste of his wise forefathers, will make the following reflection :—In the beginning of the 18th century, the Italian tongue was so well understood in England, that operas were acted on the public stage in that language.

“ One scarce knows how to be serious in the confutation of an absurdity that shows itself at the first sight. It does not want any great measure of sense to see the ridicule of this monstrous practice ; but what makes it the more astonishing, it is not the taste of the rabble, but of persons of the greatest politeness, which has established it.

“ If the Italians have a genius for music above the English, the English have a genius for other performances of a much higher nature, and capable of giving the mind a much nobler entertainment. Would one think it was possible (at a time when an author lived that was able to write the *Phædra* and *Hippolitus*) for a people to be so stupidly fond of the Italian opera as scarce to give a third day’s hearing to that admirable tragedy? Music is, certainly, a very agreeable entertainment ; but if it would take entire possession of our ears, if it would make us incapable of hearing sense, if it would exclude arts that have much greater tendency to the refinement of human nature, I must confess I would allow it no better quarter than Plato has done, who banishes it out of his commonwealth.

“ At present, our notions of music are so very uncertain, that we do not know what it is we like ; only,

in general, we are transported with anything that is not English ; so it be of foreign growth, let it be Italian, French, or High Dutch, it is the same thing. In short, our English music is quite rooted out, and nothing yet planted in its stead."

The *Spectator* was written from day to day, and was certainly not intended for *our* entertainment; yet, who can fail to be amused at the description of the stage king "who spoke in Italian and his slaves answered him in English;" and of the lover who "frequently made his court and gained the heart of his princess in a language which she did not understand?" What, too, in this style of humour, can be better than the notion of the audience getting tired of understanding half the opera, and, to ease themselves of the trouble of thinking, so ordering it that the whole opera is performed in an unknown tongue; or of the performers who, for all the audience knew to the contrary, might be calling them names and abusing them among themselves; or of the probable reflection of the future historian, that "in the beginning of the 18th century the Italian tongue was so well understood in England that operas were acted on the public stage in that language?" On the other hand, we have not, it is true, heard yet of any historian publishing the remark suggested by Addison; probably, because those historians who go to the opera—and who does not?—are quite aware that to understand an Italian opera, it is not at all necessary to have a knowledge of the Italian language.

The Italian singers might abuse us at their ease, especially in concerted pieces, and in grand finales ; but they might in the same way, and equally, without fear of detection, abuse their own countrymen. Our English vocalists, too, might indulge in the same gratification in England, and have I not mentioned that at the Grand Opera of Paris—

‘La soupe aux choux se fait dans la marmite.’

has been sung in place of Scribe’s words in the opening chorus of *Robert le Diable* ; and if *La soupe*, &c., why not anything else ? But it is a great mistake to inquire too closely into the foundation on which a joke stands, when the joke itself is good ; and I am almost ashamed, as it is, of having said so much on the subject of Addison’s pleasantries, when the pleasantries spoke so well for themselves. One might almost as well write an essay to prove seriously that language was *not* given to man “to conceal his thoughts.”

The only portion of the paper from which I have extracted the above observations that can be treated in perfect seriousness, is that which begins—“If the Italians have a genius for music, &c.,” and ends—“I would allow it no better quarter than Plato has done,” &c. Now the recent political condition of Italy sufficiently proves that music could not save a country from national degradation ; but neither could painting nor an admirable poetic literature. It is also better, no doubt, that a man should learn his duty to God and to his neighbour, than that he

should cultivate a taste for harmony, but why not do both ; and above all, why compare like with unlike ? The "performances of a much higher nature" than music undeniably exist, but they do not answer the same end. The more general science on which that of astronomy rests may be a nobler study than music, but there is nothing consoling or *per se* elevating in mathematics. Poetry, again, would by most persons be classed higher than music, though the effect of half poetry, and of imaginative literature generally, is to place the reader in a state of reverie such as music induces more immediately and more perfectly. The enjoyment of art—by which we do not mean its production, or its critical examination, but the pure enjoyment of the artistic result—has nothing strictly intellectual in it ; no man could grow wise by looking at Raphael or listening to Mozart. Nor does he derive any important intellectual ideas from many of our most beautiful poems, but simply emotion, of an elevated kind, such as is given by fine music. Music is evidently not didactic, and painting can only teach, in the ordinary sense of the word, what every one already knows ; though, of course, a painter may depict certain aspects of nature and of the human face, previously unobserved and unimagined, just as the composer, in giving a musical expression to certain sentiments and passions, can rouse in us emotions previously dormant, or never experienced before with so much intensity. But the fine arts cannot communicate ab-

abstract truths—from which it chiefly follows that no right-minded artist ever uses them with such an aim; though there is no saying what some wild enthusiasts will not endeavour to express, and other enthusiasts equally wild pretend to see, in symphonies and in big symbolical pictures. If Addison meant to insinuate that *Phædra and Hippolytus* was a much higher performance than any possible opera, he was decidedly in error. But he had not heard *Don Juan*, *William Tell*, and *Der Freischütz*; to which no one in the present day, unless musically deaf, could prefer an English translation of *Phèdre*. It would be unfair to lay too much stress on the fact that the music of Handel still lives, and with no declining life, whereas the tragedies of Racine, resuscitated by Mademoiselle Rachel, have not been heard of since the death of that admirable actress; Addison was only acquainted with the earliest of Handel's operas, and these *are* forgotten, as indeed are most of his others, with the exception, here and there, of a few detached airs.

In the sentence commencing "Music is certainly a very agreeable entertainment, but," &c., Addison says what every one, who would care to see one of Shakespeare's plays properly acted (not much cared for, however, in Addison's time), must feel now. Let us have perfect representations of Opera by all means; but it is a sad and a disgraceful thing, that in his own native country the works of the greatest dramatist who ever lived should be utterly neglected as far as

their stage representation is concerned. It is absurd to pretend that the Opera is the sole cause of this. Operas, magnificently put upon the stage, are played in England, at least at one theatre, with remarkable *completeness* of excellence, and, at more than one, with admirable singers in the principal and even in the minor parts. Shakespeare's dramas, when they are played at all, are thrown on to the stage anyhow. This would not matter so much, but our players, even in *Hamlet*, where they are especially cautioned against it, have neither the sense nor the good taste to avoid exaggeration and rant, to which, they maintain, the public are now so accustomed, that a tragedian acting naturally would make no impression. Their conventionality, moreover, makes them keep to certain stage "traditions," which are frequently absurd, while their vanity is so egregious that one who imagines himself a first-rate actor (in a day when there are no first-rate actors) will not take what he is pleased to consider a second-rate part. Our stage has no tragedian who could embody the jealousy of "Otello," as Ronconi embodies that of "Chevreuse" in *Maria di Rohan*, nor could half a dozen actors of equal reputation be persuaded in any piece to appear in half a dozen parts of various degrees of prominence, though this is what constantly takes place at the Opera.

In Addison's time, Nicolini was a far greater actor than any who was in the habit of appearing on the English stage; indeed, this alone can account for the

success of the ridiculous opera of *Hydaspes*, in which Nicolini played the principal part, and of which I shall give some account in the proper place. Doubtless also, it had much to do with the success of Italian Opera generally, which, when Addison commenced writing about it in the *Spectator*, was supported by no great composer, and was constructed on such frameworks as one would imagine could only have been imagined by a lunatic or by a pantomime writer struck serious. If Addison had not been fond of music, and moreover a very just critic, he would have dismissed the Italian Opera, such as it existed during the first days of the *Spectator*, as a hopeless mass of absurdity.

Every one must in particular admit the justness of Addison's views respecting the incongruity of operatic scenery ; indeed, his observations on that subject might with advantage be republished now and then in the present day. "What a field of raillery," he says, "would they [the wits of King Charles's time] have been let into had they been entertained with painted dragons spitting wildfire, enchanted chariots drawn by Flanders mares, and real cascades in artificial landscapes ! A little skill in criticism would inform us, that shadows and realities ought not to be mixed together in the same piece ; and that the scenes which are designed as the representations of nature should be filled with resemblances, and not with the things themselves. If one would represent a wide champaign country, filled with

herds and flocks, it would be ridiculous to draw the country only upon the scenes, and to crowd several parts of the stage with sheep and oxen. This is joining together inconsistencies, and making the decoration partly real and partly imaginary. I would recommend what I have here said to the directors as well as the admirers, of our modern opera."

In the matter of stage decoration we have "learned nothing and forgotten nothing" since the beginning of the 18th century. Servandoni, at the theatre of the Tuileries, which contained some seven thousand persons, introduced as elaborate and successful mechanical devices as any that have been known since his time; but then as now the real and artificial were mixed together, by which the general picture is necessarily rendered absurd, or rather no general picture is produced. Independently of the fact that the reality of the natural objects makes the artificiality of the manufactured ones unnecessarily evident as when the branches of real trees are agitated by a gust of wind, while those of pasteboard trees remain fixed—it is difficult in making use of natural objects on the stage to observe with any accuracy the laws of proportion and perspective, so that to the eye the realities of which the manager is so proud, are, after all, strikingly unreal. The peculiar conditions too, under which theatrical scenery is viewed, should always be taken into account. Thus, "real water," which used at one time to be announced as such a great attraction at some of our minor playhouses, does

not look like water on the stage, but has a dull, black, inky, appearance, quite sufficient to render it improbable that any despondent heroine, whatever her misfortune, would consent to drown herself in it.

The most contemptuous thing ever written against the Opera, or rather against music in general, is Swift's celebrated epigram on the Handel and Buononcini disputes:—

"Some say that Signor Buononcini
Compared to Handel is a ninny;
While others say that to him, Handel
Is hardly fit to hold a candle.
Strange that such difference should be,
'Twixt Tweedledum and Tweedledee."

Capital, telling lines, no doubt, though is it not equally strange that there should be such a difference between one piece of painted canvas and another, or between a statue by Michael Angelo and the figure of a Scotchman outside a tobacconist's shop? These differences exist, and it proves nothing against art that savages and certain exceptional natures among civilized men are unable to perceive them. We wonder how the Dean of St. Patrick's would have got on with the Abbé Arnauld, who was so impressed with the sublimity of one of the pieces in Gluck's *Iphigénie*, that he exclaimed, "With that air one might found a new religion!"

One of the wittiest poems written against our modern love of music (cultivated, it must be admitted, to a painful extent by many incapable amateurs) is

the lament by Béranger, in which the poet, after complaining that the convivial song is despised as not sufficiently artistic, and that in the presence of the opera the drama itself is fast disappearing, exclaims :

Si nous t'enterrons
Bel art dramatique,
Pour toi nous dirons
La messe en musique.

Without falling into the same error as those who have accused Addison of a selfish and interested animosity towards the Opera, I may remark that song-writers have often very little sympathy for any kind of music except that which can be easily subjected to words, as in narrative ballads, and to a certain extent ballads of all kinds. When a man says "I don't care much for music, but I like a good song," we may generally infer that he does not care for music at all. So play-wrights have a liking for music when it can be introduced as an ornament into their pieces, but not when it is made the most important element in the drama—indeed, the drama itself.

Favart, the author of numerous opera-books, has left a good satirical description in verse of French opera. It ends as follows :—

Quiconque voudra
Faire un opéra,
Emprunte à Pluton,
Son peuple démon ;
Qu'il tire des cieux
Un couple de dieux,

Qu'il y joigne un héros
Tendre jusqu' aux os.
Lardez votre sujet,
D'un éternel ballet.
Amenez au milieu d'une fête
La tempête,
Une bête,
Que quelqu'un tîtra
Dès qu'il la verra.
Quiconque voudra faire un opéra
Fuira de la raison
Le triste poison.
Il fera chanter
Concorter et sauter
Et puis le reste ira,
Tout comme il pourra.

This, from a man whose operas did not fail, but on the contrary, were highly successful, is rather too bad. But the author of the ill-fated "Rosamond" himself visited the French Opera, and has left an account of it, which corresponds closely enough to Favart's poetical description. "I have seen a couple of rivers," he says, (No. 29 of the *Spectator*) "appear in red stockings, and Alpheus, instead of having his head covered with sedge and bulrushes, making love in a fair, full-bottomed, periwig, and a plume of feathers, but with a voice so full of shakes and quavers that I should have thought the murmurs of a country brook the much more agreeable music. I remember the last opera I saw in that merry nation was the "Rape of Proserpine," where Pluto, to make the more tempting figure, puts himself in a French equipage, and brings Ascalaphus along with him as

his *valet de chambre*." This is what we call folly and impertinence, but what the French look upon as gay and polite."

Addison's account agrees with Favart's song and also with one by Panard, which contains this stanza :—

"J'ai vu le soleil et la lune
Qui faisaient des discours en l'air
J'ai vu le terrible Neptune
Sortir tout frisé de la mer."

Panard's song, which occurs at the end of a vau-deville produced in 1733, entitled *Le départ de l'Opéra*, refers to scenes behind as well as before the curtain. It could not be translated with any effect, but I may offer the reader the following modernized imitation of it, and so conclude the present chapter.

WHAT MAY BE SEEN AT THE OPERA.

I've seen Semiramis, the queen ;
I've seen the Mysteries of Isis ;
A lady full of health I've seen
Die in her dressing-gown, of phthisis.

I've seen a wretched lover sigh,
" *Fra poco*" he a corpse would be,
Transfix himself, and then—not die,
But coolly sing an air in D.

I've seen a father lose his child,
Nor seek the robbers' flight to stay ;
But, in a voice extremely mild,
Kneel down upon the stage and pray.

I've seen " Otello " stab his wife ;
The " Count di Luna " fight his brother ;
" Lucrezia " take her own son's life ;
And " John of Leyden " cut his mother.

I've seen a churchyard yield its dead,
And lifeless nuns in life rejoice ;
I've seen a statue bow its head,
And listened to its trombone voice.

I've seen a herald sound alarms,
Without evincing any fright :
Have seen an army cry " To arms "
For half an hour, and never fight.

I've seen a naiad drinking beer ;
I've seen a goddess fined a crown ;
And pirate bands, who knew no fear, ♦
By the stage manager put down ;

Seen angels in an awful rage,
And slaves receive more court than queens,
And huntresses upon the stage
Themselves pursued behind the scenes.

I've seen a maid despond in A,
Fly the perfidious one in B,
Come back to see her wedding day,
And perish in a minor key.

I've seen the realm of bliss eternal,
(The songs accompanied by harps) ;
I've seen the land of pains infernal,
With demons shouting in six sharps !

CHAPTER IV.

INTRODUCTION AND PROGRESS OF THE BALLET.

The Ballets of Versailles. — Louis XIV. astonished at his own importance. — Louis retires from the stage; congratulations addressed to him on the subject; he re-appears. — Privileges of Opera dancers and singers. — Manners and customs of the Parisian public. — The Opera under the regency. — Four ways of presenting a petition. — Law and the financial scheme. — Charon and paper money. — The Duke of Orleans as a composer. — An orchestra in a court of justice. — Handel in Paris. — Madame Sallé; her reform in the Ballet, and her first appearance in London.

AFTER the Opera comes the Ballet. Indeed, the two are so intimately mixed together that it would be impossible in giving the history of the one to omit all mention of the other. The Ballet, as the name sufficiently denotes, comes to us from the French, and in the sense of an entertainment exclusively in dancing, dates from the foundation of the Académie Royale de Musique, or soon afterwards. During the first half of the 17th century, and even earlier, ballets were performed at the French court, under the direction of an Italian, who, abandoning his real name of Baltasarini, had adopted that of Beaujoyeux. He it was who in 1581 produced the "*Ballet Comique de*

la Royne, "to celebrate the marriage of the Duc de Joyeuse. This piece, which was magnificently appointed, and of which the representation is said to have cost 3,600,000 francs, was an entertainment consisting of songs, dances, and spoken dialogue, and appears to have been the model of the masques which were afterwards until the middle of the 17th century represented in England, and of most of the ballets performed in France until about the same period. There were dancers engaged at the French Opera from its very commencement, but it was difficult to obtain them in any numbers, and, worst of all, there were no female dancers to be found. The company of vocalists could easily be recruited from the numerous cathedral choirs; for the Ballet there were only the dancing-masters of the capital to select from, the profession of dancing-mistress not having yet been invented. Nymphs, dryads, and shepherdesses were for some time represented by young boys, who, like the fauns, satyrs, and all the rest of the dancing troop wore masks. At last, however, in 1681, Terpsichore was worthily represented by dancers of her own sex, and an aristocratic corps de ballet was formed, with Madame la Dauphine, the Princess de Conti, and Mdle. de Nantes as principal dancers, supported by the Dauphin, the Prince de Conti and the Duke de Vermandois. They appeared in the *Triomphe de l'Amour*, and the astounding exhibition was fully appreciated. Previously, the ladies of the court, when they appeared in ballets, had confined

themselves to reciting verses, which sometimes, moreover, were said for them by an orator engaged for the purpose. To see a court lady dancing on the stage was quite a novelty; hence, no doubt, the success of that spectacle.

The first celebrated *ballerina* at the French Opera was Mademoiselle La Fontaine, styled *la reine de la danse*—a title of which the value was somewhat diminished by the fact that there were only three other professional danseuses in Paris. Lulli, however, paid great attention to the ballet, and under his direction it soon gained importance. To Lulli, who occasionally officiated as ballet-master, is due the introduction of rapid style of dancing, which must have contrasted strongly with the stately solemn steps that were alone in favour at the Court during the early days of Louis XIV's reign. The minuet-loving Louis had notoriously an aversion for gay brilliant music. Thus he failed altogether to appreciate the talent of "little Baptiste" not Lulli, but Anet, a pupil of Corelli, who is said to have played the sonatas of his master very gracefully, and with an "agility" which at that time was considered prodigious. The Great Monarch preferred the heavy monotonous strains of his own Baptiste, the director of the Opera. It may here be not out of place to mention that Lulli's introduction of a lively mode of dancing into France (it was only in his purely operatic music that he was so lugubriously serious) took place simultaneously with the importation from England of the country-dance—and cor-

rupted into *contre-danse*, which is now the French for quadrille. Moreover, when the French took our country-dance, a name which some etymologists would curiously enough derive from its meaningless corruption—we adopted their minuet which was first executed in England by the Marquis de Flamarens, at the Court of Charles II. The passion of our English noblemen for country-dances is recorded as follows in the memoirs of the Count de Grammont:—“Russel was one of the most vigorous dancers in England, I mean for country-dances (*contre-danses*). He had a collection of two or three hundred arranged in tables, which he danced from the book; and to prove that he was not old, he sometimes danced till he was exhausted. His dancing was a good deal like his clothes; it had been out of fashion twenty years.”

Every one knows that Louis XIV. was a great actor; and even his mother, Anne of Austria, appeared on the stage at the Court of Madrid to the astonishment and indignation of the Spaniards, who said that she was lost for them, and that it was not as Infanta of Spain, but as Queen of France, that she had performed.

On the occasion of Louis XIV's. marriage with Marie Therèse, the celebrated expression *Il n'y plus de Pyrénées* was illustrated by a ballet, in which a French nymph and a Spanish nymph sang a duet while half the dancers were dressed in the French and half in the Spanish costume.

Like other illustrious stars, Louis XIV. took his farewell of the stage more than once before he finally left it. His Histrionic Majesty was in the habit both of singing and dancing in the court ballets, and took great pleasure in reciting such graceful compliments to himself as the following :—

“ Plus brillant et mieux fait que tous les dieux ensemble
La terre ni le ciel n'ont rien qui me ressemble.”

(*Thétis et Pélée*.—Benserade, 1654),

“ Il n'est rien de si grand dans toute la nature
Selon l'âme et le cœur au point où je me vois ;
De la terre et de moi qui prendra la mesure
Trouvera que la terre est moins grande que moi.”

(*L'Impatience*.—Benserade. 1661).

On the 15th February, 1669, Louis XIV. sustained his favourite character of the Sun, in *Flora*, the eighteenth ballet in which he had played a part—and the next day solemnly announced that his dancing days were over, and that he would exhibit himself no more. The king had not only given his royal word, but for nine months had kept it, when Racine produced his *Britannicus*, in which the following lines are spoken by “Narcisse” in reference to Nero's performances in the amphitheatre.

Pour toute ambition pour vertu singulière
Il excelle à conduire un char dans la carrière ;
A disputer des prix indignes des ses mains,
A se donner lui-même en spectacle aux Romains,
A venir prodiguer sa voix sur un théâtre
A réciter des chants qu'il veut qu'on idolâtre ;
Tandis que des soldats, de moments en moments,
Vont arracher pour lui des applaudissements.

The above lines have often been quoted as an example of virtuous audacity on the part of Racine, who, however, did not write them until the monarch who at one time did not hesitate to "*se donner lui même en spectacle, &c.*," had confessed his fault and vowed never to repeat it; so that instead of a lofty rebuke, the verses were in fact an indirect compliment neatly and skilfully conveyed. So far from profiting by Racine's condemnation of Nero's frivolity and shamelessness, and retiring conscience-stricken from the stage (of which he had already taken a theatrical farewell) Louis XIV. reappeared the year afterwards, in *Les amants magnifiques*, a *Comédie-ballet*, composed by Molière and himself, in which the king figured and was applauded as author, ballet-master, dancer, mime, singer, and performer on the flute and guitar. He had taken lessons on the latter instrument from the celebrated Francisco Corbetta, who afterwards made a great sensation in England at the Court of Charles II.

If Louis XIV. did not scruple to assume the part of an actor himself, neither did he think it unbecoming that his nobles should do the same, even in presence of the general public and on the stage of the Grand Opera. "We wish, and it pleases us," he says in the letters patent granted to the Abbé Perrin, the first director of the Académie Royale de Musique (1669) "that all gentlemen (*gentilshommes*) and ladies may sing in the said pieces and representations of our Royal Academy without being considered for

that reason to derogate from their titles of nobility, or from their privileges, rights and immunities." Among the nobles who profited by this permission and appeared either as singers, or as dancers at the Opera, were the Seigneur du Porceau, and Messieurs de Chasré and Borel de Miracle; and Mesdemoiselles de Castilly, de Saint Christophe, and de Camargo. Another privilege accorded to the Opera was of such an infamous nature that were it not for positive proof we could scarcely believe it to have existed. It had full control, then, over all persons whose names were once inscribed on its books; and if a young girl went of her own accord, or was persuaded into presenting herself at the Opera, or was led away from her parents and her name entered on the lists by her seducer—then in neither case had her family any further power over her. *Lettres de cachet* even were issued, commanding the persons named therein to join the Opera; and thus the Count de Melun got possession of both the Camargos. The Duke de Fronsac was enabled to perpetrate a similar act of villany. He it is who is alluded to in the following lines by Gilbert:—

“Qu'on la séduise! Il dit: ses eunuques discrets,
Philosophes abbés, philosophes valets,
Intriguent, sèment l'or, trompent les yeux d'un père,
Elle cède, on l'enlève; en vain gémit sa mère.
Echue à l'Opéra par un rapt solennel,
Sa honte la dérobe au pouvoir paternel.”

As for men they were sent to the Opera as they

were sent to the Bastille. Several amateurs, abbés and others, the beauty of whose voices had been remarked, were arrested by virtue of *lettres de cachet*, and forced to appear at the Académie Royale de Musique, which had its conscription like the army and navy. On the other hand, we have seen that the pupils and associates of the Académie enjoyed certain privileges, such as freedom from parental restraint and the right of being immoral; to which was afterwards added that of setting creditors at defiance. The pensions of singers, dancers, and musicians belonging to the Opera were exempted from all liability to seizure for debt.

The dramatic ballet, or *ballet d'action*, was invented by the Duchess du Maine. We soon afterwards imported it into England as, in Opera, we imported the chorus, which was also a French invention, and one for which the musical drama can scarcely be too grateful. The dramatic *ballet*, however, has never been naturalized in this country. It still crosses over to us occasionally; and when we are tired of it goes back again to its native land; but even as an exotic, it has never fairly taken root in English soil.

The Duchess du Maine was celebrated for her *Nuits de Sceaux*, or *Nuits Blanches*, as they were called, which the nobles of Louis XIV.'s Court found as delightful as they found Versailles dull. The Duchess used to get up lotteries among her most favoured guests, in which the prizes were so many permissions to give a magnificent entertainment.

The letters of the alphabet were placed in a box, and the one who drew O had to get up an opera; C stood for a comedy; B for a ballet; and so on. The hostess of Sceaux had not only a passion for theatrical performances, but also a great love of literature, and the idea occurred to her of realising on the stage of her own theatre something like one of those pantomimes of antiquity of which she had read the descriptions with so much pleasure. Accordingly, she took the fourth act of *Les Horaces*, had it set to music by Mouret, just as if it were to be sung, and caused this music to be executed by the orchestra alone, while Balon and Mademoiselle Prévost, who were celebrated as dancers, but had never attempted pantomime before, played in dumb show the part of the last Horatius, and of Camilla, the sister of the Curiatii. The actor and actress entered completely into the spirit of the new drama, and performed with such truthfulness and warmth of emotion as to affect the spectators to tears.

Mouret, the musical director of *Les Nuits Blanches*, composed several operas and *ballets* for the Académie; but when the establishment at Sceaux was broken up, after the discovery of the Spanish conspiracy, in which the Duchess du Maine was implicated, he considered himself ruined, went mad and died at Charenton in the lunatic asylum.

“Long live the Regent, who would rather go to the Opera than to the Mass,” was the cry when on

the death of Louis XIV., the reins of government were assumed by the Duke of Orleans. At this time the whole expenses of the Opera, including chorus, ballet, musicians, scene painters, decorators, &c.—from the prima donna to the bill-sticker—amounted only to 67,000 francs a year, being considerably less than half what is given now to a first-rate soprano alone. The first act of the Regent in connexion with the Opera was to take its direction out of the hands of musicians, and appoint the Duc d'Antin manager. The new *impresario*, wishing to reward Thévanard, who was at that time the best singer in France, offered him the sum of 600 francs. Thévanard indignantly refused it, saying "that it was a suitable present, at most, for his valet," upon which d'Antin proposed to imprison the singer for his insolence, but abstained from doing so, for fear of irritating the public with whom Thévanard was a prodigious favourite. He, however, resigned the direction of the Opera, saying that he "wished to have nothing more to do with such *canaille*."

The next operatic edict of the Regent had reference to the admission of authors, who hitherto had enjoyed the privilege of free entry to the pit. In 1718 the Regent raised them to the amphitheatre—not as a mark of respect, but in order that they might be the more readily detected and expelled in case of their forming cabals to hiss the productions of their rivals, which, standing up in the pit in the midst of a dense crowd, they had been able to do with impunity.

Even to the present day, when authors exchange applause much more freely than hisses, the regulations of the French theatre do not admit them to the pit, though they have free access to every other part of the house.

At the commencement of the 18th century, the Opera was the scene of frequent disturbances. The Count de Talleyrand, MM. de Montmorency, Gineste, and others, endeavouring to force their way into the theatre during a rehearsal, were repulsed by the guard, and Gineste killed. The Abbés Hourlier and Barentin insulted M. Fieubet; they were about to come to blows when the guard separated them and carried off the obstreperous ecclesiastics to For l'Evêque, where they were confined for a fortnight. On their release Hourlier and Barentin, accompanied by a third abbé, took their places in the balcony over the stage, and began to sing, louder even than the actors, maintaining, when called to order, that the Opera was established for no other purpose, and that if they had a right to sing anywhere, it was at the Académie de Musique.

A balustrade separated the stage balconies from the stage, but continual attempts were made to get over it, and even to break into the actresses' dressing rooms, which were guarded by sentinels. At this period about a third of the *habitués* used to make their appearance in a state of intoxication, the example being set by the Regent himself, who could proceed direct from his residence

in the Palais Royal to the Opera, which adjoined it. To the first of the Regent's masked balls the Councillor of State, Rouillé, is said to have gone drunk from personal inclination, and the Duke de Noailles in the same condition, out of compliment to the administrator of the kingdom.

When Peter the Great visited the French Opera, in 1717, he does not appear to have been intoxicated, but he went to sleep. When he was asked whether the performance had wearied him, he is said to have replied, that on the contrary he liked it to excess, and had gone to sleep from motives of prudence. This story, however, does not quite accord with the fact that Peter introduced public theatrical performances into Russia, and encouraged his nobles to attend them.

Nothing illustrates better the heartless selfishness of Louis XV. than his conduct, not at the Opera, but at his own theatre in the Louvre, immediately after the occurrence of a terrible and fatal accident. The Chevalier de Fénélon, an ensign in the palace guard, in endeavouring to climb from one box to another, lost his footing, and fell headlong on to a spiked balustrade, where he remained transfixed through the neck. The theatre was stained with blood in a horrible manner, and the unfortunate chevalier was removed from the balustrade a dead man. Just then, the Very Christian king made his appearance. He gave the signal for the performance to commence, and the orchestra struck up as if nothing had happened.

Some idea of the morality of the French stage

during the regency and the reign of Louis XV., may be formed from the fact that, in spite of the great license accorded to the members of the Académie, or at least, tolerated and encouraged by the law, it was found absolutely necessary in 1734 to expel the *prima donna* Mademoiselle Pélissier, who had shocked even the management of the Opera. She was, however, received with open arms in London. Let us not be too hard on our neighbours.

Soon afterwards, Mademoiselle Petit, a dancer, was exiled for negligence of attire and indiscretion behind the scenes. I must add that this negligence was extreme. The most curious part of the affair, was that the Abbé de la Marre, author of several *libretti*, undertook the young lady's defence, and published a pamphlet in justification of her conduct, which is to be found among his *Œuvres diverses*.

Another *danseuse*, however, named Mariette, ruled at the Opera like a little autocrat. "The Princess," as she was named, from the regard the Prince de Carignan, titular director of the academy, was known to entertain for her, applied to the actual managers, Lecomte and Lebœuf, for a payment of salary which she had already received, and which they naturally refused to give twice. Upon this they were not only dismissed from their places (which they had purchased) but were exiled by *lettres de cachet*.

The prodigality of favourite and favoured actresses under the regency was extreme. The before-mentioned Mademoiselle Pélissier and her friend Made-

moiselle Deschamps, both gluttonous to excess, were noted for their contempt of all ordinary food, and of everything that happened to be nearly in season, or at all accessible, not merely to vulgar citizens, but to the generality of opulent sensualists. It is not said that they aspired to the dissolution of pearls in their sauces, but if green peas were served to them when the price of the dish was less than sixty francs, they sent them away in disdain. Mademoiselle Péliissier was in the receipt of 4,000 francs (£160) a year from the Opera. Mademoiselle Deschamps, who was only a figurante, contrived to get on with a salary of only sixteen pounds. And yet we have seen that they were neither of them economical.

One of the most facetious members of the Académie under the regency, was Tribou, a performer, who seems to have been qualified for every branch of the histrionic profession, and to have possessed a certain literary talent besides. This humourist had some favour to ask of the Duke of Orleans. He presented a petition to him, and after the regent had read it, said gravely—

“If your Highness would like to read it again, here is the same thing in verse.”

“Let me see it,” said the Duke.

Tribou presented his petition in verse, and afterwards expressed his readiness to sing it. He sang, and no sooner had he finished, than he added—

“If *mon Seigneur* will permit me, I shall be happy to dance it.”

"Dance it?" exclaimed the regent; "by all means!"

When Tribou had concluded his *pas*, the duke confessed that he had never before heard of a petition being either danced or sung, and for the love of novelty, granted the actor his request.

During the regency, wax was substituted for tallow in the candelabra of the Opera. This improvement was due to Law, who gave a large sum of money to the Académie for that special purpose. On the other hand, Mademoiselle Mazé, one of the prettiest dancers at the Opera, was ruined three years afterwards by the failure of this operatic benefactor's financial scheme. The poor girl put on her rouge, her mouches, and her silk stockings, and in her gayest attire, drowned herself publicly in the middle of the day at La Grenouillère.

After the break up of Law's system, the regent, terrified by the murmurs and imprecations of the Parisians, endeavoured to turn the whole current of popular hatred against the minister, by dismissing him from the administration of the finances. When Law presented himself at the Palais Royal, the regent refused to receive him; but the same evening, he admitted him by a private door, apologized to him, and tried to console him. Two days afterwards, he accompanied Law to the Opera; but to preserve him from the fury of the people, he was obliged to have him conducted home by a party of the Swiss guard.

In the fourth act of Lulli's *Alceste*, Charon admits into his bark those shades who are able to pay their passage across the Styx, and sends back those who have no money.

"Give him some bank notes," exclaimed a man in the pit to one of these penniless shades. The audience took up the cry, and the scene between Charon and the shades was, at subsequent representations, the cause of so much tumult, that it was found necessary to withdraw the piece.

The Duke of Orleans appears to have had a sincere love of music, for he composed an opera himself, entitled *Panthée*, of which the words were written by the Marquis de La Fare. *Panthée* was produced at the Duke's private theatre. After the performance, the musician, Campra, said to the composer,

"The music, your Highness, is excellent, but the poem is detestable."

The regent called La Fare.

"Ask Campra," he said, "what he thinks of the Opera; I am sure he will tell you that the poem is admirable, and the music worthless. We must conclude that the whole affair is as bad as it can be."

The Duke of Orleans had written a motet for five voices, which he wished to send to the Emperor Leopold, but before doing so, entrusted it for revision to Bernier, the composer. Bernier handed the manuscript to the Abbé de la Croix, whom the regent found examining it while Bernier himself was in the next room regaling himself with his friends.

The immediate consequences of this discovery were a box on the ear for Bernier, and ten louis for de La Croix.

The Regent also devoted some attention to the study of antiquity. He occupied himself in particular with inquiries into the nature of the music of the Greeks, and with the construction of an instrument which was to resemble their lyre.

To the same prince was due the excellent idea of engaging the celebrated Italian Opera Company of London, at that time under the direction of Handel, to give a series of performances at the Académie. A treaty was actually signed in presence of M. de Maurepas, the minister, by which Buononcini the conductor, Francesca Cuzzoni, Margarita Durastanti, Francesco Bernardi, surnamed *Senesino*, Gaetano Bernesta, and Guiseppe Boschi were to come to Paris in 1723, and give twelve representations of one or two Italian Operas, as they thought fit. Francine, the director of the Académie, engaged to pay them 85,000 francs, and to furnish new dresses to the principal performers. This treaty was not executed, probably through some obstacle interposed by Francine; for the manager signed it against his will, and on the 2nd of December following, the regent, with whom it had originated, died. The absurd privileges secured to the Académie Royale, and the consequent impossibility of giving satisfactory performances of Italian Opera elsewhere than at the chief lyrical theatre must have done much to check the progress

of dramatic music in France. From time to time Italian singers were suffered to make their appearance at the Grand Opera ; but at the regular Italian Theatre established in Paris, as at the Comédie Française, singing was only permitted under prescribed conditions, and the orchestra was strictly limited, by severe penalties, rigidly enforced, to a certain number of instruments, of which not more than six could be violins, or of the violin family.

At the Comédie Italienne an ass appeared on the stage, and began to bray.

"Silence," exclaimed Arlechinno, "music is forbidden here."

Among the distinguished amateurs of the period of the regency was M. de Saint Montant, who played admirably on the viola, and had taught his sons and daughters to do the same. Being concerned in a law suit, which had to be tried at Nîmes, he went with his family of musicians to visit the judges, laid his case before them, one after the other, and by way of peroration, gave them each a concert, with which they were so delighted that they decided unanimously in favour of M. de Saint Montant.

A law suit had previously been decided somewhat in the same manner, but much more logically, in favour of Joseph Campa, brother of the composer of that name, who was the conductor of the orchestra at the Opera of Marseilles. The manager refused to pay the musicians on the ground that they did not

play well enough. In consequence, he was summoned by the entire band, who, when they appeared in court, begged through Campra that they might be allowed to plead their own cause. The judges granted the desired permission, upon which the instrumentalists drew themselves up in orchestral order and under the direction of Campra commenced an overture of Lulli's. The execution of this piece so delighted the tribunal that with one voice it condemned the director to pay the sum demanded of him.

A still more curious dispute between a violinist and a dancer was settled in a satisfactory way for both parties. The dancer was on the stage rehearsing a new step. The violinist was in the orchestra performing the necessary musical accompaniment.

"Your scraping is enough to drive a man mad," said the dancer.

"Very likely," said the musician, "and your jumping is only worthy of a clown. Perhaps as you have such a very delicate ear," he added, "and nature has refused you the slightest grace, you would like to take my place in the orchestra?"

"Your awkwardness with the bow makes me doubt whether your most useful limbs may not be your legs," replied the dancer. "You will never do any good where you are. Why do you not try your fortune in the ballet? Give me your violin," he continued, "and come up on to the stage. I know the scale already. You can teach me to play minuets, and I will show you how to dance them."

The proposed interchange of good offices took place, and with the happiest results. The unmusical fiddler, whose name was Dupré, acquired great celebrity in the ballet, and Léclair, the awkward dancer, became the chief of the French school of violin playing.

Marie-Anne Cupis de Camargo did not lose so much time in discovering her true vocation. She gave evidence of her genius for the ballet while she was still in the cradle, and was scarcely six months old when the variety of her gestures, the grace of her movements, and the precision with which she marked the rhythm of the tunes her father played on the violin led all who saw her to believe that she would one day be a great dancer. The young Camargo, who belonged to a noble family of Spanish origin, made her *début* at the Académie in 1726, and at once achieved a decided success. People used to fight at the doors to obtain admittance the nights she performed; all the new fashions were introduced under her name, and in a very short space of time her shoemaker made his fortune. All the ladies of the court insisted on wearing shoes *à la Camargo*. But the triumph of one dancer is the despair of another. Mademoiselle Prévost, who was the queen of the ballet until Mademoiselle de Camargo appeared was not prepared to be dethroned by a *débutante*. She was so alarmed by the young girl's success that she did her utmost to keep her in the background, and contrived before long to get her placed among the

figurantes. But in spite of this loss of rank, Mademoiselle de Camargo soon found an opportunity of distinguishing herself. In a certain ballet, she formed one of a group of demons, and was standing on the stage waiting for Dumoulin, who had to dance a *pas seul*, when the orchestra began the soloist's air and continued to play it, though still no Dumoulin appeared. Mademoiselle de Camargo was seized with a sudden inspiration. She left the demoniac ranks, improvised a step in the place of the one that should have been danced by Dumoulin and executed it with so much grace and spirit that the audience were in raptures. Mademoiselle Prévost, who had previously given lessons to young Camargo, now refused to have anything to do with her, and the two *danseuses* were understood to be rivals both by the public and by one another. The chief characteristics of Camargo's dancing were grace, gaiety, and above all prodigious lightness, which was the more remarkable at this period from the fact that the mode chiefly cultivated at the Opera was one of solemn dignity. However, she had not been long on the stage before she learned to adopt from her masters and from the other dancers whatever good points their particular styles presented, and thus formed a style of her own which was pronounced perfection.

Mademoiselle de Camargo, in spite of her charming vivacity when dancing, was of a melancholy mood off the stage. She was not remarkably pretty, but her face was highly expressive, her figure exquisite, her

hands and feet of the most delicate proportions, and she possessed considerable wit. Dupré, the ex-violinist, who had leaped at a bound from the orchestra to the stage, was in the habit of dancing with Camargo, and also with Mademoiselle Sallé, another celebrity of this epoch, who afterwards visited London, where she produced the first complete *ballet d'action* ever represented, and at the same time introduced an important reform in theatrical costume.

The art of stage decoration had made considerable progress, even before the Opera was founded, but it was not until long after Mademoiselle Sallé had given the example in London that any reasonable principles were observed in the selection and design of theatrical dresses. In 1730, warriors of all kinds, Greek, Roman, and Assyrian, used to appear on the French stage in tunics belaced and beribboned, in cuirasses, and in powdered wigs bearing tails a yard long, surmounted by helmets with plumes of prodigious height. The tails, of which there were four, two in front and two behind, were neatly plaited and richly pomatumed, and when the warrior became animated, and waved his arm or shook his head, a cloud of hair powder escaped from his wig. It appeared to Mademoiselle Sallé, who, besides being an admirable dancer, was a woman of taste in all matters of art, that this sort of thing was absurd; but the reforms she suggested were looked upon as ridiculous innovations, and nearly half a century elapsed before they were adopted in France.

This ingenious *ballerina* enjoyed the friendship and regard of many of the most distinguished writers of her time. Voltaire celebrated her in verse, and when she went to London she took with her a letter of introduction from Fontenelle to Montesquieu, who was then ambassador at the English Court. Another danseuse, Mademoiselle Subligny came to England with letters of introduction from Thiriot and the Abbé Dubois to Locke. The illustrious metaphysician had no great appreciation of Mademoiselle de Subligny's talent, but he was civil and attentive to her out of regard to his friends, who were also hers, and, in the words of Fontenelle, constituted himself her "*homme d'affaires*."

Mademoiselle Sallé was not only esteemed by literature, she was adored by finance, and Samuel Bernard, the Court banker and money lender, gave her a hundred golden louis for dancing before the guests at the marriage of his daughter with the President Molé. The same opulent amateur sent a thousand francs to Mademoiselle Lemaure, by way of thanking her for resuming the part of "Délie," in the "Les Fêtes Grecques et Romaines," on the occasion of the Duchess de Mirepoix's marriage. I must mention that at this period it was not the custom in good society for young ladies to appear at the Opera before their marriage. Their mothers were determined either to keep their daughters out of harm's way, or to escape a dangerous rivalry as long as possible; but once attached to a husband the newly-married girl could show herself at

the Opera as often as she pleased, and it was a point of etiquette that through the Opera she should make her entrance into fashionable life. These *débutantes* of the audience department presented themselves to the public in their richest attire, in their most brilliant diamonds; and if the effect was good the gentlemen in the pit testified their approbation by clapping their hands.

But to return to Mademoiselle Sallé. What she proposed to introduce then, and did introduce into London, in addition to her own admirable dancing, were complete dramatic ballets, with the personages attired in the costumes of the country and time to which the subject belonged. To give some notion of the absurdity of stage costumes at this period we may mention that forty-two years afterwards, when Mademoiselle Sallé's reform had still had no effect in France, the "Galathea," in Rousseau's *Pygmalion*, wore a damask dress, made in the Polish style, over a basket hoop, and on her head an enormous *pouf*, surmounted by three ostrich feathers!

In her own *Pygmalion*, Mademoiselle Sallé carried out her new principle by appearing, not in a Polish costume, nor in a Louis Quinze dress, but in drapery imitated as closely as possible from the statues of antiquity. Of her performance, and of *Pygmalion* generally, a good account is given in the following letter, written by a correspondent in London, under the date of March 15th, 1734, to the "Mercure de France." In the style we do not recognise the

author of the "Essay on the Decadence of the Romans," and of the "Spirit of Laws," but it is just possible that M. de Montesquieu may have responded to M. de Fontenelle's letter of introduction, by writing a favourable criticism of the bearer's performance, for the "influential journal" in which the notice actually appeared.

"Mlle. Sallé," says the London correspondent, "without considering the embarrassing position in which she places me, desires me to give you an account of her success. I have to tell you in what manner she has rendered the fable of Pygmalion, and that of Ariadne and Bacchus; and of the applause with which these two ballets of her composition have been received by the Court of England.

"Pygmalion has now been represented for nearly two months, and the public is never tired of it. The subject is developed in the following manner.

"Pygmalion comes into his studio with his pupils, who perform a characteristic dance, chisel and mallet in hand. Pygmalion tells them to draw aside a curtain at the back of the studio, which, like the front is adorned with statues. The one in the middle above all the others attracts the looks and admiration of every one. Pygmalion gazes at it and sighs; he touches its feet, presses its waist, adorns its arms with precious bracelets, and covers its neck with diamonds, and, kissing the hands of his dear statue, shows that he is passionately in love with it. The amorous sculptor expresses his distress in pantomime,

falls into a state of reverie, and then throwing himself at the feet of a statue of Venus, prays to the goddess to animate his beloved figure.

“The goddess answers his prayer. Three flashes of light are seen, and to an appropriate symphony the marble beauty emerges by degrees from her state of insensibility. To the surprise of Pygmalion and his pupils she becomes animated, and evinces her astonishment at her new existence, and at the objects by which she is surrounded. The delighted Pygmalion extends his hand to her; she feels, so to speak, the ground beneath her with her feet, and takes some timid steps in the most elegant attitudes that sculpture could suggest. Pygmalion dances before her, as if to instruct her; she repeats her master’s steps, from the easiest to the most difficult. He endeavours to inspire her with the tenderness he feels himself, and succeeds in making her share that sentiment. You can understand, sir, what all the passages of this action become, executed and danced with the fine and delicate grace of Mdlle. Sallé. She ventured to appear without basket, without skirt, without a dress, in her natural hair, and with no ornament on her head. She wore nothing, in addition to her bodice and under-petticoat, but a simple robe of muslin, arranged in drapery after the model of a Greek statue.

“You cannot doubt, sir, of the prodigious success this ingenious ballet, so well executed, obtained. At the request of the king, the queen, the royal family,

and all the court, it will be performed on the occasion of Mademoiselle Sallé's benefit, for which all the boxes and places in the theatre and amphitheatre have been taken for a month past. The benefit takes place on the first of April.

"Do not expect that I can describe to you Ariadne like Pygmalion: its beauties are more noble and more difficult to relate; the expressions and sentiments are those of the profoundest grief, despair, rage and utter dejection; in a word all the great passions perfectly declaimed by means of dances, attitudes and gestures suggested by the position of a woman who is abandoned by the man she loves. You may announce, sir, that Mademoiselle Sallé becomes in this piece the rival of the Journets, the Duclos, and the Lecouvreurs. The English, who preserve so tender a recollection of their famous Oldfield, whom they have just laid in Westminster Abbey among their great statesmen (!) look upon her as resuscitated in Mademoiselle Sallé when she represents Ariadne.

"P. S. The first of this month the Prince of Orange, accompanied by the Prince of Wales, the Duke of Cumberland and the Princesses, went to Covent Garden Theatre [*Théâtre du Commun Jardin* the French newspaper has it] to see the tragedy of King Henry IV., when there was a numerous assembly; and all the receipts of the representation were for the benefit of Mademoiselle Sallé."

M. Castil Blaze, who publishes the whole of

the above letter, with the exception of the postscript, in his history of the Académie Royale, is wrong in concluding from Mademoiselle Sallé having appeared at Covent Garden, that she was engaged to dance there by Handel, who was at that time director of the Queen's Theatre (reign of Anne) in the Haymarket. M. Victor Schœlcher may also be in error when, in speaking of the absurd fable that Handel being in Paris heard a canticle by Lulli,* and coming back to England gave it to the English, as God Save the King, he assures us that Handel never set foot in Paris at all. It is certain that Handel went to Italy to engage new singers in 1733, and it is by no means improbable that he passed through Paris on his way. At all events, M. Castil Blaze assures us that in that year he visited the Académie Royale de Musique, and that "while lavishing sarcasms and raillery on our French Opera," he appreciated the talent of Mademoiselle Sallé. "A thousand crowns (three thousand francs) was the sum," he continues, "that the *virtuose* asked for composing two ballets and dancing in them at London during the carnival of 1734. The director of a rival enterprise watched for her arrival in that city, and offered her three thousand guineas instead of the three thousand crowns which she had agreed to accept from Handel; adding that nothing prevented her from making this change, inasmuch as she had signed no engagement. 'And my word,' answered the

* "Life of Handel," by Victor Schœlcher.

amiable dancer; 'is my word to count for nothing?' This reply, applauded and circulated from mouth to mouth, prepared Mademoiselle Sallé's success, and had the most fortunate influence on the representation given for her benefit. All the London journals gave magnificent accounts of the triumphs of Marie Taglioni, and of the marks of admiration and gratitude that she received. Equally flattering descriptions reached us from the icy banks of the Neva. Mere trifles, *niaiseries*, *debollezze*! This *furor*, this enthusiasm, this fanaticism, this royal, imperial liberality was very little, or rather was nothing, in comparison with the homage which the sons of Albion offered to and lavished upon the divine Sallé. History tells us that at the representation given for her benefit people fought at the doors of the theatre; that an infinity of amateurs were obliged to conquer at the point of the sword, or at least with their fists, the places which had been sold to them by auction, and at exorbitant prices. As Mademoiselle Sallé made her last curtsey and smiled upon the pit with the most charming grace, furious applause burst forth from all parts and seemed to shake the theatre to its foundation. While the whirlwind howled, while the thunder roared, a hail-storm of purses, full of gold, fell upon the stage, and a shower of bonbons followed in the same direction. These bonbons, manufactured at London, were of a singular kind; guineas—not like the doubloons, the louis d'or in paste, that are exhibited in the shop-windows of our confectioners, but good, genuine

guineas in metal of Peru, well and solidly bound together—formed the sweetmeat; the *papillote* was a bank-note. Projectiles a thousand times, and again a thousand times precious. Arguments which sounded still when the fugitive tempest of applause was at an end. Our favourite *virtuoses* place now on their heads, after pressing them for a moment to their hearts, the wreaths thrown to them by an electrified public. Mademoiselle Sallé put the proofs of gratitude offered by her host of admirers into her pockets or rather into bags. The light and playful troop of little Loves who hovered around the new dancer, picked up the precious sugar-plums as they fell, and eight dancing satyrs carried away in cadence the improvised treasures. This performance brought Mademoiselle Sallé more than two hundred thousand francs."

What M. Castil Blaze tells us about the bonbons of guineas and bank-notes may or may not be true—I have no means of judging—but it is not very likely that eight dancing satyrs appeared on the stage at Mademoiselle Sallé's benefit, inasmuch as the ballet given on that occasion was not *Bacchus and Ariadne*, as M. Castil Blaze evidently supposes, but *Pygmalion*. The London correspondent of the *Mercure de France* has mentioned that *Pygmalion* was to be performed by desire of "the king and the queen, the royal family, and all the court," and naturally that was the piece selected. According to the letter in the *Mercure* the benefit was fixed for the first of April; in-

deed, the writer in his postscript speaks of it as having taken place on that day, but he says nothing about purses of gold, nor does he speak of guineas wrapped up in bank-notes.

It appears from the *Daily Journal* that Mademoiselle Sallé took her benefit on the 21st of March (which would be April 1, New Style), when the first piece was *Henry IV., with the humours of Sir John Falstaff*, and the second *Pigmalion* (with a *Pig*). It was announced that on this occasion "servants would be permitted to keep places on the stage," whereas in most of the Covent Garden play bills of the period the following paragraph appears:—"It is desired that no person will take it ill their not being admitted behind the scenes, it being impossible to perform the entertainment unless these passages are kept clear."

At this time Handel was at the Queen's Theatre, and it was not until the next year, long after Mademoiselle Sallé had left England, that he moved to Covent Garden. The rival who is represented as having offered such magnificent terms to Mademoiselle Sallé with the view of tempting her from her allegiance to Handel, must have been, if any one, Porpora; though if M. Castil Blaze could have identified him as that celebrated composer he would certainly have mentioned the name. ^ Porpora, who arrived in England in 1733, was in 1734 director of the "Nobility's Theatre" in Lincoln's-Inn Fields.

The following is the announcement of Mademoiselle Sallé's first appearance in England :—

“AT THE THEATRE ROYAL COVENT GARDEN,
On Monday, 11th March, will be performed a Comedy, called “*The WAY of the WORLD*, by the late Mr. Congreve, with entertainments of dancing, particularly the Scottish dance by Mr. Glover and Mrs. Laguerre, Mr. le Sac, and Miss Boston, M. de la Garde and Mrs. Ogden.

“The French Sailor and his Lass, by Mademoiselle Sallé and Mr. Malter.

“The Nassau, by Mr. Glover and Miss Rogers, Mr. Pelling and Miss Norsa, Mr. Le Sac and Mrs. Ogden, Mr. de la Garde and Miss Batson.

“With a new dance, called *Pigmalion*, performed by Mr. Malter and Mademoiselle Sallé, M. Dupré, Mr. Pelling, Mr. Duke, Mr. le Sac, Mr. Newhouse, and M. de la Garde.

“No servants will be permitted to keep places on the stage.”

It appears that at the King's Theatre on the night of Mademoiselle Sallé's benefit, at Covent Garden, there was “an assembly.” “Two tickets,” says the advertisement, “will be delivered to every subscriber, this day, at White's Chocholate House, in St. James's Street, paying the subscription-money ; and if any tickets remain more than are subscribed for, they will be delivered the same day at the Opera office

in the Haymarket, at six and twenty shillings each.

"Every ticket will admit either one gentleman or two ladies.

"N. B.—Five different doors will be opened at twelve for the company to go out, where chairs will easily be had.

N. B.—To prevent a crowd there will be but 700 tickets printed."

I find from the collection of old newspapers before me, that Handel, whose *Ariadne* was first produced and whose *Pastor Fido* was revived in 1734, is called in the playbills of the King's Theatre "Mr. Handell." The following is the announcement of the performance given at that establishment on the 4th June, 1734, "being the last time of performing till after the holidays."

"**AT** the KING'S THEATRE in the HAYMARKET, on Tuesday next, being the 4th day of June will be performed an Opera called

PASTOR FIDO,

Composed by Mr. Handell, intermixed with Choruses.

The Scenery after a particular manner.

Pit and Boxes will be put together, and no persons to be admitted without tickets, which will be delivered that day at the Office of the Haymarket, at half a guinea each.

GALLERY FIVE SHILLINGS.

BY HIS MAJESTY'S COMMAND.

No persons whatever to be admitted behind the scenes.

To begin at half an hour after six o'clock."

Handel had now been twenty-four years in London where he had raised the Italian Opera to a pitch of excellence unequalled elsewhere in Europe, except perhaps at Dresden, which during the first half of the 18th century was universally celebrated for the perfection of its operatic performances at the Court Theatre directed by Hasse. But of the introduction of Italian Opera into England, and especially of the arrival of Handel, his operatic enterprises, his successes and his failures, I must speak in another chapter.

CHAPTER V.

INTRODUCTION OF ITALIAN OPERA INTO ENGLAND.

Operatic Feuds.—Objections to Nose-pulling.—Arsinoe.—Camilla and the Boar.—Steele on insanity.—Handel and Clayton.—Nicolini and the lion.—Rinaldo and the sparrows.—Hamlet set to music.—Three enraged musicians.—Three charming singers.

It was not until the close of the 17th century that England was visited by any Italian singers of note, among the first of whom was the well-known Margarita de l'Epine. This vocalist's name frequently occurs in the current literature of the period, and Swift in his "Journal to Stella" speaks in his own graceful way of having heard "Margarita and her sister and another drab, and a parcel of fiddlers at Windsor." This was in 1711, nineteen years after her arrival in England—a proof that even then Italian singers, who had once obtained the favour of the English public, were determined to profit by it as long as possible. Margarita was an excellent musician, and a virtuous and amiable woman; but she was ugly and was called Hecate by her husband, who had married her for her money.

The history of the Opera in England is, more than

in any other country, the history of feuds and rivalries between theatres and singers. The rival of Margarita de l'Epine was Mrs. Tofts, who in 1703 was singing English and Italian songs at the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Instead of enjoying the talent of both, the London public began to dispute as to which was the best; and what was still more absurd, to create disturbances at the very theatres where they sang, so that the English party prevented Margarita de l'Epine from being heard, while the Italians drowned the voice of Mrs. Tofts.* Once, when the amiable Margarita was singing at Drury Lane, she was not only hissed and hooted, but an orange was thrown at her by a woman who was recognised as being or having been in the service of the English vocalist. Hence considerable scandal and the following public statement which appeared in the *Daily Courant* of February 8th, 1704.

“Ann Barwick having occasioned a disturbance at the Theatre Royal on Saturday last, the 5th of February, and being thereupon taken into custody, Mrs. Tofts, in vindication of her innocence, sent a letter to Mr. Rich, master of the said Theatre, which is as followeth:—‘Sir, I was very much surprised when I was informed that Ann Barwick, who was

* I adhere to the custom of calling Margarita de l'Epine by her pretty Christian name, without any complimentary prefix, and of styling her probably more dignified competitor, Mrs. Tofts. Thus in later times it has been the fashion to say, Jenny Lind, and even Giulia Grisi, but not Theresa Titiens or Henrietta Sontag.

lately my servant, had committed a rudeness last night at the playhouse by throwing of oranges and hissing when Mrs. L'Epine, the Italian gentlewoman, sang. I hope no one will think it was in the least with my privity, as I assure you it was not. I abhor such practices, and I hope you will cause her to be prosecuted that she may be punished as she deserves. I am, sir, your humble servant, KATHARINE TOFTS.'"

At this period the unruly critics of the pit behaved with as little ceremony to those who differed from them among the audience as to those performers whom they disliked on the stage. In proof of this, we may quote a portion of the very amusing letter written by a linen-draper named Heywood (under the signature of James Easy), to the *Spectator*,* on the subject of nose-pulling. "A friend of mine, the other night, applauding what a graceful exit Mr. Wilkes made," says Mr. Easy, "one of these nose-wringers overhearing him, pulled him by the nose. I was in the pit the other night," he adds, "when it was very crowded. A gentleman leaning upon me, and very heavily, I civilly requested him to remove his hand; for which he pulled me by the nose. I would not resent it in so public a place, because I was unwilling to create a disturbance; but have since reflected upon it as a thing that is unmanly and disingenuous, renders the nose-puller odious, and makes the person pulled by the nose look little

* *Spectator*, No. 261.

and contemptible. This grievance I humbly request you will endeavour to redress."

Fifty years later, at the Grand Opera of Paris, a gentleman in the pit applauded the dancing of Mademoiselle Asselin. "*Il faut être bien bête pour applaudir une telle sauteuse*," said his neighbour, upon which a challenge was given and received, the two amateurs went out and fought, when the aggressor fell mortally wounded.

In the letters of Frenchmen and Englishmen from Italy, describing the Italian theatres of the eighteenth century, we read neither of pelting with oranges, nor of nose-pulling, nor of duelling. One of the most remarkable things in the demeanour of the audience appears to have been the unceremonious manner in which the aristocratic occupants of the boxes behaved towards the people in the pit. The nobles, who were somewhat given to expectoration, thought nothing of spitting down into the parterre, and "what is still more extraordinary," says Baretti, who notices this curious habit, "those who received it on their faces and heads, did not seem to resent it much." We are told, however, that "they made the most curious grimaces in the world."

But to return to the rival singers of London. In 1705, then, Mrs. Tofts and Margarita were both engaged at Drury Lane; the former taking the principal part in *Arsinoë*, which was performed in English, the latter singing Italian songs before and

after the Opera. *Arsinoe* ("the first Opera," says the *Spectator*, "that gave us a taste for Italian music") was the composition of Clayton, the *maestro* who afterwards wrote music for Addison's unfortunate *Rosamond*, and who described the purpose and character of his first work in the following words:—"The design of this entertainment being to introduce the Italian manner of singing to the English stage, which has not been before attempted, I was obliged to have an Italian Opera translated, in which the words, however mean in several places, suited much better with that manner of music than others more poetical would do. The style of this music is to express the passions, which is the soul of music, and though the voices are not equal to the Italian, yet I have engaged the best that were to be found in England; and I have not been wanting, to the utmost of my diligence, in the instructing of them. The music, being recitative, may not at first meet with that general acceptation, as is to be hoped for, from the audience's being better acquainted with it; but if this attempt shall be a means of bringing this manner of music to be used in my native country, I shall think my study and pains very well employed."

Mr. Hogarth, in his interesting "Memoirs of the Opera," remarks that "though *Arsinoe* is utterly unworthy of criticism, yet there is something amusing in the folly of the composer. The very first song may be taken as a specimen. The words are—

Queen of Darkness, sable night,
 Ease a wandering lover's pain ;
 Guide me, lead me
 Where the nymph whom I adore,
 Sleeping, dreaming,
 Thinks of love and me no more.

The first two lines are spoken in a meagre sort of recitative. Then there is a miserable air, the first part of which consists of the next two lines, and concludes with a perfect close. The second part of the air is on the last two lines ; after which, there is, as usual, a *da capo*, and the first part is repeated ; the song finishing in the middle of a sentence,—

“ Guide me, lead me
 Where the nymph whom I adore ”—

which, I venture to say, has not been beaten by Bunn, or Fitzball, or any of our worst librettists at their worst moments.

The music of *Camilla*, the second opera in the Italian style, performed in England, was by Marco Antonio Buononcini, the brother of Handel's future rival. The work was produced at the original Opera House, erected by Sir John Vanburgh, on the site of the present building, in 1705.* It was sung half in English and half in Italian. Mrs. Tofts played the

* Burnt down in 1789. The present edifice was erected from designs by Michael Novosielski, (who, to judge from his name, must have been a Russian or a Pole), in 1790. Altered and enlarged by Nash and Repton, in 1816—18.

part of "*Camilla*," and kept to *her* mother tongue. Valentini played that of the hero, and kept to his. Both the Buononcini's were composers of high ability and the music of *Camilla* is said to have been very beautiful. The melodies given to the two principal singers were original, expressive, and well harmonized. Mrs. Tofts' impersonation of the Amazonian lady was much admired by persons of taste, and there was a part for a pig which threw the vulgar into ecstasies.

"Mr. Spectator," wrote a correspondent, "your having been so humble as to take notice of the epistles of the animal, embolden me, who am the wild boar that was killed by Mrs. Tofts, to represent to you that I think I was hardly used in not having the part of the lion in *Hydaspes* given to me. It would have been but a natural step for me to have personated that noble creature, after having behaved myself to satisfaction in the part above mentioned; but that of a lion is too great a character for one that never trode the stage before but upon two legs. As for the little resistance I made, I hope it may be excused when it is considered that the dart was thrown at me by so fair a hand. I must confess I had but just put on my brutality; and *Camilla*'s charms were such, that beholding her erect mien, hearing her charming voice, and astonished with her graceful motion, I could not keep up to my assumed fierceness, but died like a man."

Mrs. Tofts quitted the stage in 1709, in consequence of mental derangement. We have seen

Mademoiselle Desmâtins, half fancying in her excessive vanity that she was really the queen or princess she had been representing the same night on the stage, and ordering the servants, on her return home, to prepare her throne and serve her on their bended knees. Poor Mrs. Tofts laboured under a similar delusion; only, in her case, it was not a moral malady, but the hallucination of a diseased intellect. "In the meridian of her beauty," says Hawkins, in his *History of Music*, "and possessed of a large sum of money, which she had acquired by singing, Mrs. Tofts quitted the stage, and was married to Mr. Joseph Smith, a gentleman, who being appointed consul for the English nation, at Venice, she went thither with him. Mr. Smith was a great collector of books, and patron of the arts. He lived in great state and magnificence; but the disorder of his wife returning, she dwelt sequestered from the world, in a remote part of the house, and had a large garden to range in, in which she would frequently walk, singing and giving way to that innocent frenzy which had seized her in the early part of her life."

The terrible affliction, which had fallen upon the favourite operatic vocalist, is touched upon by Steele, with singular want of feeling, of taste, and even of common decency, in No. 20 of the *Tatler*. "The theatre," he says, "is breaking, and there is a great desolation among the gentlemen and ladies who were the ornaments of the town, and used to shine in plumes and diadems, the heroes being most of them

pressed, and the queens beating hemp." Then with more brutality than humour he adds, "The great revolutions of this nature bring to my mind the distress of the unfortunate 'Camilla,' who has had the ill luck to break before her voice, and to disappear at a time when her beauty was in the height of its bloom. This lady entered so thoroughly into the great characters she acted, that when she had finished her part she could not think of retrenching her equipage, but would appear in her own lodgings with the same magnificence as she did upon the stage. This greatness of soul has reduced that unhappy princess to a voluntary retirement, where she now passes her time among the woods and forests, thinking on the crowns and sceptres she has lost, and often humming over in her solitude:—

'I was born of royal race,
Yet must wander in disgrace, &c.'

"But for fear of being overheard, and her quality known, she usually sings it in Italian:—

'Nacqui al regno, nacqui al trono,
E pur sono,
Sventatura pastorella.'"

It is "the Christian soldier" who wrote this; who rejoiced in this anti-christian and cowardly spirit at the dark calamity which had befallen an amiable and charming vocalist, whose only fault was that she

had aided the fortunes of a theatre abhorred by Steele. And what cause had Steele for detesting the Italian Opera with the unreasonable and really stupid hatred which he displayed towards it? Addison, as it seems to me, has been most unfairly attacked for his strictures on the operatic performances of his day. They were often just, they were never ill-natured, and they were always enveloped in such a delightful garb of humour, that there is not a sentence, certainly not a whole paper, and scarcely even a phrase,* in all he has published about the Opera, that a musician, unless already "enraged," would wish unwritten. It is unreasonable and unworthy to connect Addison's pleasantries on the subject of *Arsinoe*, *Camilla*, *Hydaspes*, and *Rinaldo*, with the failure of his *Rosamond*, which, as the reader is aware, was set to music by the ignorant impostor called Clayton. Addison, it is true, did not write any of his admirably humorous papers about the Italian Opera until after the production of *Rosamond*, but it was not until some time afterwards that the *Spectator* first appeared. St. Evrémond, who was a great lover of the Opera, wrote much more against it than Addison. In fact, the new entertainment was the subject of the day. It was full of incongruities, and naturally recom-

* It is to be regretted, however, that in sneering at an Italian librettist who called Handel "The Orpheus of our age," Addison thought fit to speak of the great composer with neither politeness, nor wit, nor even accuracy, as "Mynheer." — *Spectator*, No. V.

mended itself to the attention of wits; and we all know that, as a rule, wits do not deal in praise. All that *Rosamond* proves is, that Addison liked the Opera or he would never have written it.

But about this Christian Soldier who endeavours to convince his readers that music is a thing to be despised because it does not appeal to the understanding, and who laughs at the misfortunes of a poor lunatic because she is no longer able to attract the public by her singing from the dramatic theatre in which he took so deep an interest, and of which he afterwards became patentee?*

Of course, if music appealed only to the understanding, mad Saul would have found no solace in the tones of David's harp, and it would be hideously irreverent to imagine the angels of heaven singing hymns to their Creator. Steele, of course, knew this, and also that the pleasure given by music is not a mere physical sensation, to be enjoyed as an Angora cat enjoys the smell of flowers, but he seems to have thought it was his duty (as it afterwards became his interest) to write up the drama and write down the

* The same trenchant critics who attribute Addison's satire of the Opera to the failure of his *Rosamond*, explain Steele's attacks by his position as patentee of Drury Lane Theatre. Here, however, dates come to our assistance. The jocose paper on Mrs. Toft's insanity appeared in the *Tatler*, in 1709. The attacks of the unhappy Clayton on Handel (see following pages) were published under Steele's auspices in the *Spectator*, in 1711—12. Steele did not succeed Collier as manager or patentee of Drury Lane, together with Wilks, Doggett, and Cibber, until 1714.

Opera at all hazards. Powerful penmanship it must have been, however, that would have put down Handel, or that would have kept up Mr. Ambrose Phillips. It would have been easier, at least it would have been more successful, to have gone upon the other tack. We all know Handel, and (if the expression be permitted) he becomes more immortal every day. Steele, it is true, did not hold his music in any esteem, but Mozart, a competent judge in such matters, *did*, and reckoned it an honour to write additional accompaniments to the elder master's greatest work. And who was this Ambrose Phillips? some reader, not necessarily ignorant of his country's literature, may ask. He was Racine's thief. He stole *Andromaque*, and gave it to the English as his own, calling it prosaically and stupidly "The Distrest Mother," which is as if we should call "Abel" "The Uncivil Brother," or "Philoctetes" "The Man with the Bad Foot," or "Prometheus," "The Gentleman with the Liver Complaint." Steele wrote a paper* on the reading of this new tragedy, in which he declares that "the style of the play is such as becomes those of the first education, and the sentiments worthy of those of the highest figure." He also says, "I congratulate the age that they are at last to see truth and human life represented in the incidents which concern heroes and heroines."

Translated Racine was very popular just then with writers who regarded Shakespeare as a dealer in the

* *Spectator*, 290.

false sublime. "Would one think it was possible," asks Addison, "at a time when an author lived that was able to write the *Phedra and Hippolytus* (translate *Phèdre*, that is to say), for a people to be so stupidly fond of the Italian Opera as scarce to give a third day's hearing to that admirable tragedy."

Sensible people! It seems quite possible to us in the present day that they should have preferred Handel's music to Racine's rhymed prose, rendered into English rhymes by a man who had nothing of the poetical spirit which Racine, though writing in an unpoetical language, certainly possessed.

The triumphant success of Handel's *Rinaldo* was felt deeply by Steele and by the *Spectator's* favourite composer Clayton, a bad musician, and apart from the practice of his art, as base a scoundrel as ever libelled a great man. But of course critics who besides expatiating on the blemishes of Shakespeare dwelt on the beauties of Racine as improved by Phillips, would be sure to enjoy the cacophony of Clayton ;

"Qui Bavium non odit amet tua carmina Mævi."

However we must leave the chivalrous Steele and his faithful minstrel for the present. We have done with the writer's triumphant gloating over the insanity of the poor *prima donna*. We shall presently see the musician publishing impudent falsehoods, under the auspices of his literary patron, concerning Handel and his genius, and endeavouring, always with the same protection, to form a cabal for the avowed purpose of

driving him from the country which he was so greatly benefiting.

Before Handel's arrival in England Steele had not only insulted operatic singers, but in recording the success of Scarlatti's *Pyrrhus and Demetrius*, had openly proclaimed his chagrin thereat. "This intelligence," he says, "is not very agreeable to our friends of the theatre."

Pyrrhus and Demetrius, in which the celebrated Nicolini made his first appearance, was the last opera performed partly in English and partly in Italian.

In 1710, *Almahide*, of which the music is attributed to Buononcini, was played entirely in the Italian language, with Valentine, Nicolini, Margarita de l'Epine, Cassani, and "Signora Isabella" (Isabella Girardeau), in the principal parts. The same year *Hydaspes* was produced. This marvellous work, which is not likely to be forgotten by readers of the *Spectator*, was brought out under the direction of Nicolini, the sopranist, who performed the part of the hero. The other singers were those included in the cast of *Almahide*, with the addition of Lawrence, an English tenor, who was in the habit of singing in Italian operas, and of whom it was humourously said by Addison, in his proposition for an opera in Greek, that he "could learn to speak the language as well as he does Italian in a fortnight's time." "*Hydaspes*" is a sort of profane Daniel, who being thrown into an amphitheatre to be devoured by a lion, is saved not by

faith, but by love; the presence of his mistress among the spectators inspiring him with such courage, that after appealing to the monster in a minor key, and telling him that he may tear his bosom but cannot touch his heart, he attacks him in the relative major, and strangles him.

"There is nothing of late years," says Addison, in one of the most amusing of his papers on the Opera, "that has afforded matter of greater amusement to the town than Signior Nicolini's combat with a lion in the Haymarket, which has been very often exhibited to the general satisfaction of most of the nobility and gentry in the kingdom of Great Britain." Upon the first rumour of this intended combat, it was confidently affirmed, and is still believed by many in both galleries, that there would be a tame lion sent from the tower every Opera night, in order to be killed by Hydaspes; this report, though altogether so universally prevalent in the upper regions of the play-house, that some of the most refined politicians in those parts of the audience gave it out in whisper, that the lion was a cousin-german of the tiger who made his appearance in King William's days, and that the stage would be supplied with lions at the public expense, during the whole session. Many likewise were the conjectures of the treatment which this lion was to meet with from the hands of Signior Nicolini; some supposed that he was to subdue him in recitative, as Orpheus used to serve the wild beasts in his time, and afterwards to knock him

on the head; some fancied that the lion would not pretend to lay his paws upon the hero, by reason of the received opinion, that a lion will not hurt a virgin. Several who pretended to have seen the Opera in Italy, had informed their friends, that the lion was to act a part in high Dutch, and roar twice or thrice to a thorough bass, before he fell at the feet of Hydaspes. To clear up a matter that was so variously reported, I have made it my business to examine whether this pretended lion is really the savage he appears to be, or only a counterfeit.

“But before I communicate my discoveries, I must acquaint the reader that upon my walking behind the scenes last winter, as I was thinking on something else, I accidentally justled against a monstrous animal that extremely startled me, and upon my nearer survey much surprised, told me in a gentle voice that I might come by him if I pleased, ‘for,’ says he, ‘I do not intend to hurt any body.’ I thanked him very kindly, and passed by him; and in a little time after saw him leap upon the stage, and act his part with very great applause. It has been observed by several, that the lion has changed his manner of acting twice or thrice since his first appearance; which will not seem strange, when I acquaint my reader that the lion has been changed upon the audience three several times. The first lion was a candle-snuffer, who being a fellow of a testy choleric temper, overdid his part, and would not suffer himself to be killed so easily as he ought to have done;

besides, it was observed of him, that he grew more surly every time he came out of the lion; and having dropped some words in ordinary conversation, as if he had not fought his best, and that he suffered himself to be thrown upon his back in the scuffle, and that he would wrestle with Mr. Nicolini for what he pleased, out of his lion's skin, it was thought proper to discard him; and it is verily believed to this day, that had he been brought upon the stage another time, he would certainly have done mischief. Besides, it was objected against the first lion, that he reared himself so high upon his hinder paws, and walked in so erect a posture; that he looked more like an old man than a lion.

“The second lion was a tailor by trade, who belonged to the play-house, and had the character of a mild and peaceable man in his profession. If the former was too furious, this was too sheepish for his part; insomuch that after a short modest walk upon the stage, he would fall at the first touch of Hydaspees, without grappling with him, and giving him an opportunity of showing his variety of Italian trips. It is said, indeed, that he once gave him a rip in his flesh colour doublet; but this was only to make work for himself, in his private character of a tailor. I must not omit that it was this second lion who treated me with so much humanity behind the scenes. The acting lion at present is, as I am informed, a country gentleman who does it for his diversion, but desires his name may be concealed. He

says, very handsomely, in his own excuse, that he does not act for gain ; that he indulges an innocent pleasure in it ; and that it is better to pass away an evening in this manner, than in gaming and drinking ; but at the same time says, with a very agreeable raillery upon himself, and that if his name should be known, the ill-natured world might call him 'the ass in the lion's skin.' This gentleman's temper is made out of such a happy mixture of the mild and the cholerick, that he outdoes both his predecessors, and has drawn together greater audiences than have been known in the memory of man.

"I must not conclude my narrative without taking notice of a groundless report that has been raised to a gentleman's disadvantage, of whom I must declare myself an admirer ; namely, that Signior Nicolini and the lion have been sitting peaceably by one another, and smoking a pipe together, behind the scenes ; by which their enemies would insinuate, it is but a sham combat which they represent upon the stage ; but upon enquiry I find, that if any such correspondence has passed between them, it was not till the combat was over, when the lion was to be looked upon as dead, according to the received rules of the drama. Besides, this is what is practised every day in Westminster Hall, where nothing is more usual than to see a couple of lawyers, who have been tearing each other to pieces in the court, embracing one another.

"I would not be thought, in any part of this rela-

tion, to reflect upon Signior Nicolini, who, in acting this part, only complies with the wretched taste of his audience; he knows very well that the lion has many more admirers than himself; as they say of the famous equestrian statue on the Pont Neuf at Paris, that more people go to see the horse than the king who sits upon it. On the contrary, it gives me a just indignation to see a person whose action gives new majesty to kings, resolution to heroes, and softness to lovers, thus sinking from the greatness of his behaviour, and degraded into the character of a London 'prentice. I have often wished that our tragedians would copy after this great master in action. Could they make the same use of their arms and legs, and inform their faces with as significant looks and passions, how glorious would an English tragedy appear with that action which is capable of giving dignity to the forced thoughts, cold conceits, and unnatural expressions of an Italian Opera! In the meantime, I have related this combat of the lion, to show what are at present the reigning entertainments of the politer part of Great Britain."

But the operatic year of 1710 is remarkable for something more than the production of *Almahide* and *Hydaspes*; for in 1710 Handel arrived in England, and the year after brought out his *Rinaldo*, the first of the thirty-five operas which he gave to the English stage. For Handel we are indebted to Hanover. It was at Hanover that the English noblemen who invited him to London first met

the great composer ; and it was the Elector of Hanover, afterwards George I., who granted him permission to come, and who when he in his turn arrived in England to assume the crown, added considerably to the pension which Queen Anne had already granted to the former chapel-master of the Hanoverian court. In 1710 the director of the theatre in the Haymarket was Aaron Hill, who no sooner heard of Handel's arrival in London than he went to him, and requested him to compose an opera for his establishment. Handel consented, and Hill furnished him with a plan, sketched out by himself, on the subject of *Rinaldo and Armida* in Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered*, the writing of the *libretto* being entrusted to an Italian poet of some note named Rossi. In the advertisements of this opera Handel's name does not appear ; not at least in that which calls attention to its first representation and which simply sets forth that "at the Queen's Theatre in the Haymarket will be performed a new opera called *Rinaldo*."

It was in *Rinaldo* that the celebrated operatic sparrows made their first appearance on the stage—with what success may be gathered from the following notice of their performance, which I extract from No. 5 of the *Spectator*.

"As I was walking in the streets about a fortnight ago," says Addison, "I saw an ordinary fellow carrying a cage full of little birds upon his shoulder ; and as I was wondering with myself what use he would

put them to, he was met very luckily by an acquaintance, who had the same curiosity. Upon his asking him what he had upon his shoulder, he told him that he had been buying sparrows for the opera. 'Sparrows, for the opera,' says his friend, licking his lips, 'What! are they to be roasted?' 'No, no,' says the other, 'they are to enter towards the end of the first act, and to fly about the stage.'

"This strange dialogue wakened my curiosity so far that I immediately bought the opera, by which means I perceived the sparrows were to act the part of singing birds in a delightful grove, though upon a nearer inquiry I found the sparrows put the same trick upon the audience that Sir Martin Mar-all practised upon his mistress; for though they flew in sight, the music proceeded from a concert of flageolets and bird-calls, which were planted behind the scenes. At the same time I made this discovery, I found by the discourse of the actors, that there were great designs on foot for the improvement of the Opera; that it had been proposed to break down a part of the wall, and to surprise the audience with a party of a hundred horse; and that there was actually a project of bringing the New River into the house, to be employed in jetteaus and waterworks. This project, as I have since heard, is postponed till the summer season, when it is thought that the coolness which proceeds from fountains and cascades will be more acceptable and refreshing to people of quality. In the meantime, to find out a more agreeable entertain-

ment for the winter season, the opera of *Rinaldo* is filled with thunder and lightning, illuminations, and fireworks; which the audience may look upon without catching cold, and indeed without much danger of being burnt; for there are several engines filled with water, and ready to play at a minute's warning, in case any such accident should happen. However, as I have a very great friendship for the owner of this theatre, I hope that he has been wise enough to insure his house before he would let this opera be acted in it.

"But to return to the sparrows. There have been so many flights of them let loose in this opera, that it is feared the house will never get rid of them; and that in other plays they may make their entrance in very wrong and improper scenes, so as to be seen flying in a lady's bedchamber, or perching upon a king's throne; besides the inconveniences which the heads of the audience may sometimes suffer from them. I am credibly informed, that there was once a design of casting into an opera the story of 'Whittington and his Cat,' and that in order to it there had been set together a great quantity of mice, but Mr. Rich, the proprietor of the playhouse, very prudently considered that it would be impossible for the cat to kill them all, and that consequently the princes of the stage might be as much infested with mice as the prince of the island was before the cat's arrival upon it, for which reason he would not permit it to be acted in his house. And, indeed, I cannot blame

him; for as he said very well upon that occasion, 'I do not hear that any of the performers in our opera pretend to equal the famous piper who made all the mice of a great town in Germany follow his music, and by that means cleared the place of those noxious little animals.'

"Before I dismiss this paper, I must inform my reader that I hear that there is a treaty on foot between London and Wise,* (who will be appointed gardeners of the playhouse) to furnish the opera of *Rinaldo and Armida* with an orange grove; and that the next time it is acted the singing birds will be impersonated by tom tits: the undertakers being resolved to spare neither pains nor money for the gratification of their audience."

Steele, in No. 14 of the *Spectator*, tells us that — "The sparrows and chaffinches at the Haymarket fly, as yet, very irregularly over the stage; and instead of perching on the trees and performing their parts, these young actors either get into the galleries or put out the candles," for which and other reasons equally good, he decides that Mr. Powell's Puppet-show is preferable as a place of entertainment to the Opera, and that Handel's *Rinaldo* is inferior as a production of art to a puppet-show drama. Indeed, though Steele, in the *Tatler*, and Addison in the *Spectator*, have said very civil things about Nicolini, neither of them appears to have been impressed in the

* The Queen's gardeners.

slightest degree by Handel's music, nor does it even seem to have occurred to them that the composer's share in producing an opera was by any means considerable. Steele, thought the Opera a decidedly "un-intellectual" entertainment (how much purely intellectual enjoyment is there, we wonder, in the pleasure derived from the contemplation of a virgin, by Raphael, and what is the meaning in criticising art of looking at it merely in its intellectual aspect?); but he at the same time bears testimony to the high (æsthetic) gratification he derived from the performance of Nicolini, who "by the grace and propriety of his action and gesture, does honour to the human figure," and who "sets off the character he bears in an opera by his action as much as he does the words of it by his voice."*

In 1711, in addition to Handel's *Rinaldo*, *Antiochus*, an opera, by Apostolo Zeno and Gasparini, was performed, and about the same time, or soon afterwards, *Ambleto*, by the same author and composer, was brought out. If we smile at Signor Verdi for attempting to turn *Macbeth* into an opera, what are we to say to Zeno's and Gasparini's experiment with the far more unsuitable tragedy of *Hamlet*? In *Macbeth*, the songs and choruses of witches, the banquet with the apparition of the murdered Banquo, and above all, the sleep-walking scene might well inspire a composer of genius; but a "Hamlet" without philosophy, or, worse still, a

* *Tatler*, No. 118.

"Hamlet" who searches his own soul to orchestral accompaniments—this must indeed be absurd. I learn from Dr. Burney, that *Ambleto* was written for Venice, that it was represented at the Queen's Theatre, in London, and that "the overture had four movements ending with a jig!" An overture to *Hamlet* "ending with a jig!" To think that this was tolerated, and that we are shocked in the present day by burlesques put forth as such! The *Spectator*, while apparently keeping a sharp look out for all that is ridiculous, or that can be represented as ridiculous in the operatic performances of the day, has not a word to say against *Ambleto*. But it must be remembered that since Milton's time, "Nature's sweetest child" had ceased to be appreciated in England even by the most esteemed writers—who, however, for the most part, if they were not good critics, could claim no literary merit beyond that of style. In a paper on Milton, one of whose noblest sonnets is in praise of Shakespeare, Addison, after showing how, by certain verbal expedients, bathos may be avoided and sublimity attained, calmly points to the works of Lee and Shakespeare as affording instances of the false sublime,* adding coolly that, "*in these authors* the affectation of greatness often hurts the perspicuity of the style."

I have spoken of Steele's and Clayton's consternation, at the success of *Rinaldo*. Some months after the production of that work, the despicable Clayton, sup-

* *Spectator*, No. 285.

ported by two musicians named Nicolino Haym, and Charles Dieupart, (who were becomingly indignant at a foreigner like Handel presuming to entertain a British audience), wrote a letter to the *Spectator*, which Steele published in No. 258 of that journal, introducing it by a preface, full of wisdom, in which it is set forth that "pleasure and recreation of one kind or other are absolutely necessary to relieve our minds and bodies from too constant attention and labour," and that, "where public diversions are tolerated, it behoves persons of distinction, with their power and example, to preside over them in such a manner as to check anything that tends to the corruption of manners, or which is too mean or trivial for the entertainment of reasonable creatures." The letter from the "enraged musicians" is described as coming "from three persons who, as soon as named, will be thought capable of advancing the present state of music"—that is to say, of superseding Handel. But the same perverse public, which in spite of the *Spectator's* remonstrances, preferred *Rinaldo* to translated Racine, persisted in admiring Handel's music, and in paying no heed whatever to the cacophony of Clayton. Here is the letter from the three miserable musicasters to their patron and fellow-conspirator.

"We, whose names are subscribed, think you the properest person to signify what we have to offer the town in behalf of ourselves, and the art which we profess,—music. We conceive hopes of your favour from

the speculations on the mistakes which the town run into with regard to their pleasure of this kind; and believing your method of judging is, that you consider music only valuable, as it is agreeable to and heightens the purpose of poetry, we consent that it is not only the true way of relishing that pleasure, but also that without it a composure of music is the same thing as a poem, where all the rules of poetical numbers are observed, though the words have no sense or meaning; to say it shorter, mere musical sounds in our art are no other than nonsense-verses are in poetry." [A beautiful melody then, apart from words, said no more to these musicians, and to the patron whose idiotic theory they are so proud to have adopted than a set of nonsense-verses!] "Music, therefore, is to aggravate what is intended by poetry; it must always have some passion or sentiment to express, or else violins, voices, or any other organs of sound, afford an entertainment very little above the rattles of children. It was from this opinion of the matter, that when Mr. Clayton had finished his studies in Italy, and brought over the Opera of *Arsinoe*, that Mr. Haym and Mr. Dieupart, who had the honour to be well-known and received among the nobility and gentry, were zealously inclined to assist, by their solicitations, in introducing so elegant an entertainment, as the Italian music grafted upon English poetry." [Such poetry, for instance, as

" Guide me, lead me,
Where the nymph whom I adore

which occurred in Clayton's *Arsinoe*—Haym, it may be remembered, was the ingenious musician who arranged *Pyrrhus and Demetrius* for the Anglo-Italian stage, when half of the music was sung in one language, and half in the other.] “For this end,” continue the precious trio, “Mr. Dieupart and Mr. Haym, according to their several opportunities, promoted the introduction of *Arsinoe*, and did it to the best advantage so great a novelty would allow. It is not proper to trouble you with particulars of the just complaints we all of us have to make; but so it is that without regard to our obliging pains, we are all equally set aside in the present opera. Our application, therefore, to you is only to insert this letter in your paper, that the town may know we have all three joined together to make entertainments of music for the future at Mr. Clayton's house, in York Buildings. What we promise ourselves is, to make a subscription of two guineas, for eight times, and that the entertainment, with the names of the authors of the poetry, may be printed, to be sold in the house, with an account of the several authors of the vocal as well as the instrumental music for each night; the money to be paid at the receipt of the tickets, at Mr. Charles Lulli's. It will, we hope, sir, be easily allowed that we are capable of undertaking to exhibit, by our joint force and different qualifications, all that can be done in music” [how charmingly modest!] “but lest you should think so dry a thing as an account of our proposal should be a matter

unworthy of your paper, which generally contains something of public use, give us leave to say, that favouring our design is no less than reviving an art, which runs to ruin by the utmost barbarism under an affectation of knowledge. We aim at establishing some settled notion of what is music, at recovering from neglect and want very many families who depend upon it, at making all foreigners who pretend to succeed in England to learn the language of it as we ourselves have done, and not be so insolent as to expect a whole nation, a refined and learned nation, should submit to learn theirs. In a word, Mr. Spectator, with all deference and humility, we hope to behave ourselves in this undertaking in such a manner, that all Englishmen who have any skill in music may be furthered in it for their profit or diversion by what new things we shall produce; never pretending to surpass others, or asserting that anything which is a science is not attainable by all men of all nations who have proper genius for it. We say, sir, what we hope for, it is not expected will arrive to us by contemning others, but through the utmost diligence recommending ourselves."

Poor Clayton seems, here and there, to have really fancied that it was his mission to put down Handel, and stuck to him for some time in most pertinacious style. One is reminded of the writer who endeavoured to turn Wilhelm Meister into ridicule, and of the epigram which that attempt suggested to Goethe, ending:—

"Hat doch die Wallfisch seine Laus."

But Clayton was really a creator, and proposed nothing less than "to revive an art which was running to ruin by the utmost barbarism under an affectation of knowledge." One would have thought that this was going a little too far. Handel affecting knowledge—Handel a barbarian? Surely Steele in giving the sanction of his name to such assertions as these, puts himself in a lower position even than Voltaire uttering his celebrated dictum about the genius of Shakespeare; for after all, Voltaire was the first Frenchman to discover any beauties in Shakespeare at all, and it was in defending him against the stupid prejudices of Laharpe that he made use of the unfortunate expression with which he has so often been reproached, and which he put forward in the form of a concession to his adversary.

Clayton and his second fiddles returned to the attack a few weeks afterwards (January 18th, 1712). "It is industriously insinuated," they complained, "that our intention is to destroy operas in general, but we beg of you (that is to say, the *Spectator*, as represented by Steele, who signs the number with his T) to insert this explanation of ourselves in your paper. Our purpose is only to improve our circumstances by improving the art which we profess" [the knaves are getting candid]. "We see it utterly destroyed at present, and as we were the persons who introduced operas, we think it a groundless imputation that we should set up against the Opera itself," &c., &c.

I

What became of Clayton, Haym, and Dieupart, and their speculation, I do not know, nor do I think that any one can care. At all events, even with the assistance of Steele and the *Spectator* they did not extinguish Handel.

The most celebrated vocalist at the theatre in the Haymarket, from the arrival of Handel in England until after the formation of the Royal Academy of Music, in 1720, was Anastasia Robinson, a *contralto*, who was remarkable as much for her graceful acting as for her expressive singing. She made her first appearance in a *pasticcio* called *Creso*, in 1714, and continued singing in the operas of Handel and other composers until 1724, when she contracted a private marriage with the Earl of Peterborough and retired from the stage. Lady Delany, an intimate friend of Lady Peterborough, communicated the following account of her marriage and the circumstances under which it was made, to Dr. Burney, who publishes it in his "History of Music."

"Mrs. Anastasia Robinson was of middling stature, not handsome, but of a pleasing, modest countenance, with large blue eyes. Her deportment was easy, unaffected, and graceful. Her manner and address very engaging, and her behaviour on all occasions that of a gentlewoman, with perfect propriety. She was not only liked by all her acquaintance, but loved and caressed by persons of the highest rank, with whom she appeared always equal, without

assuming. Her father's house, in Golden Square was frequented by all the men of genius and refined taste of the times. Among the number of persons of distinction who frequented Mr. Robinson's house, and seemed to distinguish his daughter in a particular manner, were the Earl of Peterborough and General H—. The latter had shown a long attachment to her, and his attentions were so remarkable that they seemed more than the effects of common politeness; and as he was a very agreeable man, and in good circumstances, he was favourably received, not doubting but that his intentions were honourable. A declaration of a very contrary nature was treated with the contempt it deserved, though Mrs. Robinson was very much prepossessed in his favour.

"Soon after this, Lord Peterborough endeavoured to convince her of his partial regard for her; but, agreeable and artful as he was, she remained very much upon her guard, which rather increased than diminished his admiration and passion for her. Yet still his pride struggled with his inclination, for all this time she was engaged to sing in public, a circumstance very grievous to her; but, urged by the best of motives, she submitted to it, in order to assist her parents, whose fortune was much reduced by Mr. Robinson's loss of sight, which deprived him of the benefit of his profession as a painter.

"At length Lord Peterborough made his declaration to her on honourable terms. He found it would be in vain to make proposals on any other, and as he

omitted no circumstance that could engage her esteem and gratitude, she accepted them. He earnestly requested her keeping it a secret till a more convenient time for him to make it known, to which she readily consented, having a perfect confidence in his honour.

“Mrs. A. Robinson had a sister, a very pretty accomplished woman, who married D’Arbuthnot’s brother. After the death of Mr. Robinson, Lord Peterborough took a house near Fulham, in the neighbourhood of his own villa at Parson’s-green, where he settled Mrs. Robinson and her mother. They never lived under the same roof, till the earl, being seized with a violent fit of illness, solicited her to attend him at Mount Bevis, near Southampton, which she refused with firmness, but upon condition that, though still denied to take his name, she might be permitted to wear her wedding-ring; to which, finding her inexorable, he at length consented.

“His haughty spirit was still reluctant to the making a declaration that would have done justice to so worthy a character as the person to whom he was now united; and indeed his uncontrollable temper and high opinion of his own actions made him a very awful husband, ill suited to Lady Peterborough’s good sense, amiable temper, and delicate sentiments. She was a Roman Catholic, but never gave offence to those of a contrary opinion, though very strict in what she thought her duty. Her excellent principles and fortitude of mind supported her through many

severe trials in her conjugal state. But at last he prevailed on himself to do her justice, instigated, it is supposed by his bad state of health, which obliged him to seek another climate, and she absolutely refused to go with him unless he declared his marriage. Her attendance on him in this illness nearly cost her her life.

“He appointed a day for all his nearest relations to meet him at the apartment over the gateway of St. James’s palace, belonging to Mr. Poyntz, who was married to Lord Peterborough’s niece, and at that time preceptor of Prince William, afterwards Duke of Cumberland. He also appointed Lady Peterborough to be there at the same time. When they were all assembled, he began a most eloquent oration, enumerating all the virtues and perfections of Mrs. A. Robinson, and the rectitude of her conduct during his long acquaintance with her, for which he acknowledged his great obligation and sincere attachment, declaring he was determined to do her that justice which he ought to have done long ago, which was presenting her to all his family as his wife. He spoke this harangue with so much energy, and in parts so pathetically, that Lady Peterborough, not being apprised of his intentions, was so affected that she fainted away in the midst of the company.

“After Lord Peterborough’s death, she lived a very retired life, chiefly at Mount Bevis, and was seldom prevailed on to leave that habitation but by the Duchess of Portland, who was always happy to have

her company at Bulstrode, when she could obtain it, and often visited her at her own house.

“Among Lord Peterborough’s papers, she found his memoirs, written by himself, in which he declared he had been guilty of such actions as would have reflected very much upon his character, for which reason she burnt them. This, however, contributed to complete the excellency of her principles, though it did not fail giving offence to the curious inquirers after anecdotes of so remarkable a character as that of the Earl of Peterborough.”

The deserved good fortune of Anastasia Robinson reminds me of the careers of two other vocalists of this period, one of them owed her elevation to a fortunate accident ; while the third, though she entered upon the same possible road to the peerage as the second, yet never attained it. “The Duke of Bolton,” says Swift, in one of his letters, “has run away with Polly Peachum, having settled four hundred a year on her during pleasure, and upon disagreement, two hundred more.” This was the charming Lavinia Fenton, the original Polly of the Beggars’ Opera, between whom and the Duke the disagreement anticipated by the amiable Swift never took place. Twenty-three years after the elopement, the Duke’s wife died, and Lavinia then became the Duchess of Bolton. She was, according to the account given of her by Dr. Joseph Warton, “a very accomplished and most agreeable companion ; had much wit, good strong sense, and a just taste in polite literature.

Her person was agreeable and well made," continues Dr. Warton, "though I think she never could be called a beauty. I have had the pleasure of being at table with her, when her conversation was much admired by the first character of the age, particularly by old Lord Bathurst and Lord Granville."

The beautiful Miss Campion, who was singing about the same time as Mrs. Tofts, and who died in 1706, when she was only eighteen, did *not* become the Duchess of Devonshire; but the heart-broken old Duke, who appears to have been most fervently attached to her, buried her in his family vault in the church of Latimers, Buckinghamshire, and placed a Latin inscription on her monument, testifying that she was wise beyond her years, and bountiful to the poor even beyond her abilities; and at the theatre, where she had some times acted, modest and pure; but being seized with a hectic fever, she had submitted to her fate with a firm confidence and Christian piety; and that William, Duke of Devonshire, had, upon her beloved remains, erected this tomb as sacred to her memory.

CHAPTER VI .

THE ITALIAN OPERA UNDER HANDEL.

Handel at Hamburgh.—Handel in London.—The Queen's Theatre
—The Royal Academy of Music.—Operatic Feuds.—Porpora and
the Nobility's Opera.

THE great dates of Handel's career as an operatic composer and director are :—

1711, when he produced *Rinaldo*, his first opera, at the Queen's Theatre, in the Haymarket ;

1720, when the Royal Academy of Music was established under his management at the same theatre, (which, with the accession of George I., had become "the King's") ;

1734, when in commencing the season at the King's Theatre with a new company, he had to contend against the "Nobility's Opera" just opened at the Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, under the direction of Porpora ;

1735, when he moved to Covent Garden, Porpora and "la nobilita Britannica" going at the same time to the King's Theatre.

Both operas failed in 1737, and Handel then went back to the King's Theatre, for which he wrote his last opera *Deidamia* in 1740.

Of Handel's arrival in England, and of the manner in which his first opera was received, I have spoken in the preceding chapter. Of his previous life in Germany but little is recorded; indeed, he left that country at the age of twenty-five. It is known, however, that he was for some time engaged at the Hamburg theatre, where operas had been performed in the German language since 1678. Rinuccini's *Dafne*, set to music by Schutz, was represented, as has been already mentioned, at Dresden in 1627, (or according to other accounts 1630); but this was a private affair in honour of a court marriage, and the first opera produced in Germany in public, and in the German language, was Thiele's *Adam and Eve*, which was given at Hamburg in 1678. The reputation of Keiser at the court of Woffenbüttel caused the directors of the Hamburg Theatre, towards the close of the century, to send and offer him an engagement; he accepted it, and in the course of twenty-seven years produced as many as one hundred and sixty operas. Mattheson states that both Handel and Hasse (who was afterwards director of the celebrated Dresden Opera) formed their styles on that of Keiser.* Mattheson, himself a composer, succeeded Keiser as conductor

* It is also known that both profited by the study of Scarlatti's works.

of the orchestra at the Hamburg Theatre, holding that post, however, conjointly with Handel, whose quarrel and duel with Mattheson have often been related. Handel was presiding in the orchestra while Mattheson was on the stage performing in an opera of his own composition. The opera being concluded, Mattheson proposed to take Handel's place at the harpsichord, which the latter refused to give up. The rival conductors quarrelled as they were leaving the theatre. The quarrel led to a blow and the blow to a fight with swords in the market place, which was terminated by Mattheson breaking the point of his sword on one of his antagonist's buttons, or as others have it, on the score of his own opera, which Handel carried beneath his coat.

Handel went from Hamburg to Hanover, where, as we have seen, he received an invitation from some English noblemen to visit London, and, with the permission and encouragement of the Elector, accepted it.

Handel's *Rinaldo* was followed at the King's Theatre by his *Il Pastor Fido* (1712), his *Teseo* (1713), and his *Amadigi* (1715). Soon after the production of *Amadigi*, the performances at the King's Theatre seem to have ceased until 1720, when the "Royal Academy of Music" was formed. This so-called "Academy" was the result of a project to establish a permanent Italian opera in London. It was supported by a number of the nobility, with George I. at their head, and a fund of £50,000 was raised

among the subscribers, to which the king contributed £1,000. The management of the "Academy" was entrusted to a governor, a deputy governor, and twenty directors, (why not to a head master and assistants?) and for the first year the Duke of Newcastle was appointed governor; Lord Bingley, deputy governor; while among the directors were the Dukes of Portland and Queensberry, the Earls of Burlington, Stair and Waldegrave, Lords Chetwynd and Stanhope, Sir John Vanburgh, (architect of the theatre), Generals Dormer, Wade, and Hunter, &c. The worse than unmeaning title given to the new opera was of course imitated from the French; the governor, deputy governor, and directors being doubtless unacquainted with the circumstances under which the French Opera received the misnomer which it still retains.* They might have known, however, that the "Académie Royale" of Paris, at that time under the direction of Rameau, was held in very little esteem, except by the French themselves, as an operatic theatre, and moreover, that Italian music was never performed there at all. Indeed, for half a century afterwards, the French execrated Italian music and would not listen to Italian singers—which gives us some notion of what musical taste in France must have been at the time of our Royal Academy being founded. The title would have been absurd even if the French Opera had been the finest in Europe; as

* See Chapter II.

it was nothing of the kind, and as it was, moreover, sworn to its own native psalmody, to give such a title to an Italian theatre, supported by musicians and singers of the greatest excellence, was a triple absurdity. Strangely enough, even in the present day, the Americans, as ingenious as the English of George I.'s reign, call their magnificent Italian Opera House at New York the Academy of Music. As a matter of association, it would be far more reasonable to call it the "St. Charles's Theatre," or the "Scale Theatre."

The musical direction of our Royal Academy of Music was confided to Handel, who, besides composing for the theatre himself, engaged Buononcini and Ariosti to write for it. He also proceeded to Dresden, already celebrated throughout Europe for the excellence of its Italian Opera, and engaged Senesino, Berenstadt, Boschi, and Signora Durastanti.

Handel's first opera at the Royal Academy of Music was *Radamisto*, which was hailed on its production as its composer's masterpiece. "It seems," says Dr. Burney, "as if he was not insensible of its worth, as he dedicated a book of the words to the king, George I., subscribing himself his Majesty's 'most faithful subject,' which, as he was neither a Hanoverian by birth, nor a native of England, seems to imply his having been naturalised here by a bill in Parliament."

Buononcini, (who, compared with Handel, was a ninny, though others said that to him Handel was

scarcely fit to hold a candle, &c.) produced his first opera also in 1720. It was received with much favour, and by the Buononcinists with enthusiasm.

The next opera was *Muzio Scevola*, composed by Handel, Buononcini, and Ariosti together. It is said that the task of joint production was imposed upon the three musicians by the masters of the Academy, by way of competitive examination, and with a view to test the abilities of each in a decisive manner. If there were any grounds for believing the story, it might be asked, who among the directors were thought, or thought themselves qualified to act as judges in so difficult and delicate a matter.

In the meanwhile the opera of the three composers did but little good to the theatre, which, in spite of its admirable company, was found a losing speculation, after a little more than a year, to the extent of £15,000. Thirty-five thousand pounds remained to be paid up, but the rest of the subscription money was not forthcoming, and the directors were unable to obtain it until after they had advertised in the newspapers that defaulters would be proceeded against "with the utmost rigour of the law."

A new mode of subscription was then devised, by which tickets were granted for the season of fifty performances on receipt of ten guineas down, and an engagement to pay five guineas more on the 1st of February, and a second five guineas on the 1st of May. Thus originated the operatic subscription list

which has been continued with certain modifications, and with a few short intervals, up to the present day.

Buononcini's *Griselda*, which passes for his best opera, was produced in 1722, with Anastasia Robinson in the part of the heroine. Handel's *Ottone* and *Flavio* were brought out in 1723; his *Giulio Cesare* and *Tamerlano* in 1724; his *Rodelinda* in 1725; his *Scipione* and *Alessandro* in 1726; his *Admeto* and *Ricardo* in 1727; his *Siroe* and *Tolomeo* in 1728—when the Royal Academy of Music, which had been carried on with varying success, and on the whole with considerable ill success, finally closed.

Buononcini's last opera, *Astyanax*, was produced in 1727, after which the Duchess of Marlborough, his constant patroness, gave the composer a pension of five hundred a year. A few years afterwards, however, he stole a madrigal, the invention of a Venetian named Lotti, and the theft having been discovered and clearly proved, Buononcini left the country in disgrace. Similar thefts are practised in the present day, but with discretion and with ingeniously worded title pages. Buononcini should have simply called his plagiarism a "Venetian Madrigal, dedicated to the Duchess of Marlborough by G. Buononcini." This unfortunate composer, whom Swift had certainly described in a prophetic spirit as "a ninny," left England in 1733, with an Italian Count whose title appears to have been about as authentic as Buononcini's madrigal, and who pretended to possess the art of making gold, but

abstained from practising it otherwise than by swindling. Buononcini was for a time the dupe of this impostor. In the meanwhile he continued the exercise of his profession, at Paris, where we lose sight of him. In 1748, however, he went to Vienna, and by command of the Emperor composed the music for the festivities given in celebration of the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. Thence he proceeded with Montecelli, the composer, to Venice, where the affair of the madrigal was probably by this time forgotten. At all events, no importance was attached to it, and Buononcini was engaged to write an opera for the Carnival. He was at this time nearly ninety years of age. The date of his death is not recorded, but Dr. Burney tells us that he is supposed to have lived till nearly a hundred.

Besides the annual subscriptions, to the Royal Academy of Music the whole of the original capital of £50,000 was spent in seven years. In spite, then, of the admirable works produced by Handel, the unrivalled company by which they were executed, and the immense sums of money lavished upon the entertainment generally, the Italian Opera in London proved in 1728 what it had proved twelve years before, a positive and unmistakable failure. This could scarcely have been owing, as has been surmised, to the violence of the disputes concerning the merits of Handel and Buononcini, the composers, or of Faustina and Cuzzoni, the singers, for the natural effect of such contests would have been to keep up an

interest in the performances. Probably few at that time had any real love for Italian music. A certain number, no doubt, attended the Italian Opera for the sake of fashion, but the greater majority of the theatre-going public were quite indifferent to its charms. Dr. Arbuthnot, one of the few literary men of the day who seems to have really cared for music, writes as follows, in the *London Journal*, under the date of March 23rd, 1728:—"As there is nothing which surprises all true lovers of music more than the neglect into which the Italian operas are at present fallen, so I cannot but think it a very extraordinary instance of the fickle and inconstant temper of the English nation, a failing which they have always been endeavouring to cast upon their neighbours in France, but to which they themselves have just as good a title, as will appear to any one who will take the trouble to consult our historians." He points out that after adopting the Italian Opera with eagerness, we began, as soon as we had obtained it in perfection, to make it a pretext for disputes instead of enjoying it, and concludes that it was supported among us for a time, not from genuine taste, but simply from fashion. He observes that *The Beggars' Opera*, then just produced, was "a touchstone to try British taste on," and that it has "proved effectual in discovering our true inclinations, which, however artfully they may have been disguised for a while, will one time or another, start up and disclose themselves. *Æsop's* story of the cat, who, at the petition of her lover, was

changed into a fine woman, is pretty well known, notwithstanding which alteration, we find that upon the appearance of a mouse, she could not resist the temptation of springing out of her husband's arms to pursue it, though it was on the very wedding night. Our English audience have been for some time returning to their cattish nature, of which some particular sounds from the gallery have given us sufficient warning. And since they have so openly declared themselves, I must only desire that they will not think they can put on the fine woman again just when they please, but content themselves with their skill in caterwauling. For my own part, I cannot think it would be any loss to real lovers of music, if all those false friends who have made pretensions to it only in compliance with the fashion, would separate themselves from them; provided our Italian Opera could be brought under such regulations as to go on without them. We might then be able to sit and enjoy an entertainment of this sort, free from those disturbances which are frequent in English theatres, without any regard, not only to performers, but even to the presence of Majesty itself. In short, my comfort is, that though so great a desertion may force us so to contract the expenses of our operas, as would put an end to our having them in as great perfection as at present, yet we shall be able at least to hear them without interruption."

The Faustina and Cuzzoni disputes, to which Arbuthnot alludes, where he speaks of "those dis-

turbances which are frequent in English theatres," appear to have been quite as violent as those with which the names of Handel and Buononcini are associated. Most of this musical party-warfare (of which the most notorious examples are those just mentioned, the Gluck and Piccinni contests in Paris, and the quarrels between the admirers of Madame Mara and Madame Todi in the same city) has been confined to England and France, though a very pretty quarrel was once got up at the Dresden Theatre, between the followers of Faustina, at that time the wife of Hasse the composer, and Mingotti. The Italians have shown themselves changeable and capricious, and have often hissed one night those whom they have applauded the night afterwards; but, in the Italian Theatres, we find no instances of systematic partisanship maintained obstinately and stolidly for years, and I fancy that it is only among unmusical nations, or in an unmusical age, that anything of the kind takes place. The ardour and duration of such disputes are naturally in proportion to the ignorance and folly of the disputants. In science, or even in art, where the principles of art are well understood, they are next to impossible. Self-styled connoisseurs, however, with neither taste nor knowledge can go on squabbling about composers and singers, especially if they never listen to them, to all eternity.

Faustina and Cuzzoni were both admirable vocalists, and in entirely different styles, so that there

was not even the shadow of a pretext for praising one at the expense of the other. Tosi, their contemporary, in his *Osservazioni sopra il Canto Figurato*,* thus compares them: "The one," he says (meaning Faustina), "is inimitable for a privileged gift of singing and enchanting the world with an astonishing felicity in executing difficulties with a brilliancy I know not whether derived from nature or art, which pleases to excess. The delightful soothing cantabile of the other, joined to the sweetness of a fine voice, a perfect intonation, strictness of time, and the rarest productions of genius in her embellishments, are qualifications as peculiar and uncommon as they are difficult to be imitated. The pathos of the one and the rapidity of the other are distinctly characteristic. What a beautiful mixture it would be, if the excellences of these two angelic beings could be united in a single individual!"

Quantz, the celebrated flute-player, and teacher of that instrument to Frederic the Great, came to London in 1727, and heard Handel's *Admeto* executed to perfection at the Royal Academy of Music. The principal parts were filled by Senesino Cuzzoni and Faustina, and Quantz's account of the two latter agrees with that given by Signor Tosi. Cuzzoni had a soft limpid voice, a pure intonation, a perfect shake. Her style was simple, noble and touching. In allegro movements, her rapidity of execution was not remarkable, &c., &c. Her acting was

* Quoted by Mr. Hogarth, in his *Memoirs of the Opera*.

cold, and though she was very beautiful, her beauty produced no effect on the stage. Faustina, on the other hand, was passionate and full of expression, as an actress, while as a vocalist she was remarkable for the fluency and brilliancy of her articulation, and could sing with ease what would have been considered difficult passages for the violin. Her rapid repetition of the same note—the violin "*tremolo*") was one of her most surprising feats. This artifice was afterwards imitated with the greatest success by Farinelli, Monticelli, Visconti, and the charming Mingotti, and at a later period, Madame Catalani produced some of her greatest effects in the same style.

Faustina and Cuzzoni made their first appearance together at Venice in 1719. In 1725, Faustina went to Vienna, and met with an enthusiastic reception from the habitués of the Court Theatre. She left Vienna the same year for London, where she arrived when Cuzzoni's reputation was at its height.

Cuzzoni made her first appearance in London in 1723, and was a member of Handel's company when the singers were engaged, at the suggestion of the regent, to give a series of performances in Paris; this engagement, which was due in the first instance to the solicitations of the Marchioness de Prie, was, as I have already mentioned, never carried out. Whether the Faustina and Cuzzoni disputes originated with a cabal against the singer in possession of the public favour, or whether the admirers of the accepted favorite felt it their duty to support her by attacking

all new comers, is not by any means clear ; but Faustina had scarcely arrived when the feud commenced. Quantz tells us that as soon as one began to sing, the partisans of the other began to hiss. The Cuzzoni party, which was headed by the Countess of Pembroke, made a point of hissing whenever Faustina appeared. Faustina, who if not better-looking, was more agreeable than Cuzzoni, had most of the men on her side. Her patronesses were the Countess of Burlington and Lady Delawar.

The most remarkable of the many disturbances caused by the rivalry between these two singers (forced upon them as it was) took place in June 1727. the *London Journal* of June 10th in that year, tells us in its description of the affair, that "the contention at first was only carried on by hissing on one side and clapping on the other, but proceeded at length to the melodious use of cat-calls and other accompaniments which manifested the zeal and politeness of that illustrious assembly." We are further informed that the Princess Catherine was there, but neither her Royal Highness's presence, nor the laws of decorum could restrain the glorious ardour of the combatants. The appearance of Faustina appears to have been the signal for the commencement of this disgraceful riot, to judge from the following epigram on the proceedings of the night.

"Old poets sing that beasts did dance,
Whenever Orpheus played ;
So to Faustina's charming voice
Wise Pembroke's asses brayed."

Cuzzoni had also her poet, and her departure from England was the occasion of the following pretty but silly lines, addressed to her by Ambrose Phillips :—

“ Little Syren of the stage,
Charmer of an idle age,
Empty warbler, breathing lyre,
Wanton gale of fond desire ;
Bane of every manly art,
Sweet enfeebler of the heart,
O, too pleasing is thy strain,
Hence to Southern climes again !
Tuneful mischief, vocal spell,
To this island bid farewell ;
Leave us as we ought to be,
Leave the Britons rough and free.”

The Britons had shown themselves sufficiently “rough and free,” while Cuzzoni was singing to them. The circumstances of this vocalist’s leaving London were rather curious, and show to what an extent the Faustina and Cuzzoni disputes must have disgusted the directors of the Academy ; the caprice of one of them must also have irritated Handel considerably, for it is related that once when Cuzzoni, at a rehearsal, positively refused to sing an air that Handel had written for her, she could only be convinced of the necessity of doing so by the composer threatening to throw her out of the window. It was known that each was about to sign a new contract, and Cuzzoni’s patronesses made her take an oath not to accept lower terms than Faustina. The directors ingeniously and politely took advantage of this, and offered her exactly one guinea less.

Cuzzoni made her retreat, and Faustina remained in possession of the field of battle.

However, Faustina, after the failure of the Academy in the following year, herself returned to Italy, and met her rival at Venice in 1729, and again, in 1730. Cuzzoni returned to London in 1734, and sang at the Opera in Lincoln's-Inn Fields, established under the direction of Porpora, in opposition to Handel. She visited London a third time in 1750, when a concert was given for her benefit; but the poor little syren was now old and infirm; she had lost her voice, and even the enemies of Faustina would not come to applaud her. This stage queen had a most melancholy end. From England she went to Holland, where she was imprisoned for debt, being allowed, however, to go out in the evenings (doubtless under the guardianship of a jailer) and sing at the theatres, by which means she gained enough money to obtain her liberation. Having quite lost her voice, she is said to have maintained herself for some time at Bologna by button-making. The manner of her death is not known; but probably she had the same end as those stage-queens mentioned by the dramatic critic in *Candide*: "*On les adore quand elles sont belles, on les jette a la voirie quand elles sont mortes.*"

The career of Faustina on the other hand did not belie her auspicious name. In 1727, at Venice, she met Hasse, whose music owed much of its success to her admirable singing. The composer fell in love

with this charming vocalist, married her, and in 1730 accepted an offer from Augustus, King of Poland, and Elector of Saxony, to direct the Opera of Dresden. Here Faustina renewed her successes, and for fifteen years reigned with undisputed supremacy at the Court Theatre. Then, however, a new Cuzzoni appeared in the person of Signora Mingotti.

Regina Valentini, a pupil and domestic at the Convent of the Ursulines, possessed a beautiful voice, but so little taste for household work, that to avoid its drudgery and the ridicule to which her inability to go through it exposed her, she resolved to make what profit she could out of her singing. Old Mingotti, the manager, was willing enough to aid her in this laudable enterprise; and accordingly married her and put her under the tuition of Porpora, the future opponent of Handel, and actual rival of Hasse. In due time Mingotti made her first appearance at the Dresden Opera, when her singing called forth almost unanimous applause; we say "almost," because Hasse and some of his personal friends persisted in denying her talent. The successful *débutante* was offered a lucrative engagement at Naples, where she created the greatest enthusiasm by her performance of the part of *Aristea* in the *Olimpiade*, with music by Galuppi. Mingotti was now the great singer of the day; she received propositions from managers in all parts of Europe, but decided to return to the scene of her earliest triumphs at Dresden. This was in 1748.

Hasse was then composing his *Demofonte*. He knew well enough the strong, and thought he had remarked the weak, points in Mingotti's voice; and, in order to show the latter to the greatest possible disadvantage, provided the unsuspecting singer with an *adagio* which rose and fell upon the very notes which he considered the most doubtful in her unusually perfect organ. To render the vocalist's deficiencies as apparent as possible, he did the next thing to making her sing the insidious *adagio* without accompaniment; for the only accompaniment he wrote for it was a *pizzicato* of violins. Regina at the very first rehearsal, understood the snare, said nothing about it, but studied her *adagio* till she sang it with such perfection that what had been intended to discover her weakness only served in the most striking manner to exhibit her strength. The air which was to have ruined Mingotti's reputation brought her the greatest success she had ever obtained. Her execution was so faultless that Faustina herself could find nothing to say against it. A story is told of Sir Charles Williams, the English Minister at the Court of Dresden, who had taken a prominent part in the Hasse and Faustina cabal, and had been in the habit of saying that Mingotti was doubtless a brilliant singer, but that in the expressive style and in passages of sustained notes she was heard to disadvantage—a story is told of this candid and gentlemanly critic going to Mingotti after she had sung her treacherous solo, and apologizing to her publicly

for ever having entertained a doubt as to the completeness of her talent.

Hasse remained thirty-three years in the service of the Elector and made the Dresden Opera the first in Europe; but in 1763 the troubles of unhappy Poland having begun, he retired with Faustina on a small pension to Vienna and thence to Venice, where they both died in the year 1783, Hasse being then eighty-four years of age and his wife ninety.

The most celebrated of the other singers at the Royal Academy of Music were Durastanti and Senesino, both of whom were engaged by Handel at Dresden, and appeared in London at the opening of the new establishment. In 1723, however, Cuzzoni arrived, and Durastanti, acknowledging the superior merit of that singer, took her departure. At least the acknowledgment was made for her in a song written by Pope, which she addressed to the audience at her farewell performance, and which ended with this couplet :—

“ But let old charmers yield to new ;
Happy soil, adieu, adieu ! ”

Either singers were very different then from what they are now, or Durastanti could not have understood these lines, which, strangely enough, are said to have been written by Pope at the desire of her patron, the Earl of Peterborough. Surely Anastasia Robinson, the future Countess, would not have thanked the earl for such a compliment, in however

perfect a style it might have been expressed. Madame Durastanti appears to have been much esteemed in England, and I read in the *Evening Post* of March 7th, 1721, that "Last Thursday, His Majesty was pleased to stand godfather, and the Princess and the Lady Bruce godmothers, to a daughter of Mrs. Durastanti, chief singer in the opera house. The Marquis Visconti for the king, and the Lady Lichfield for the princess."

Senesino, successor to Nicolini, and the second of the noble order of sopranists who appeared in England, was the principal contralto singer ("*modo vir, modo femina*") in Handel's operas, until 1726, when the state of his health compelled him to return to Italy. He came back to England in 1730, and resumed his position at the King's Theatre, under Handel. In 1733, when the rival company was formed at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre, Senesino joined it, but retired after the appearance of Farinelli, who at once eclipsed all other singers.

Steele's journal, *The Theatre*, entertains us with a brief account of the vanity of one Signor Beneditti, who appears to have performed principal parts, at least for a time, at the Opera in 1720. The paper, which is written by Sir Richard Steele's coadjutor, Sir John Edgar, commences with a furious onslaught on a company of French actors, who were at that time performing in London, and of whose opening representation we are told that "if we are any longer to march on two legs, and not be quite prone,

and on all four like the other animals" we must "assume manhood and humane indignation against so barbarous an affront. But I foresee," continues Sir John,* "that the theatre is to be utterly destroyed, and sensation is to banish reflection as sound is to beat down sense. The head and the heart are to be moved no more, but the basest parts of the body to be hereafter the sole instruments of human delight. A regular, orderly, and well-governed company of actors, that lived in reputation and credit and under decent settlement are to be torn to pieces and made vagabond, to make room for even foreign vagrants, who deserved no reception but in Bridewell, even before they affronted the assembly, composed of British nobility and gentry, with representations that could introduce nothing of even French except, &c. Though the French are so boisterous and void of all moderation or temper in their conduct, the Italians are a more tractable and elegant nation. If the French players have laid aside all shame, the Italian singers are as eminently nice and delicate, which the reader will observe from the following account I have received from the Haymarket.

" ' Sir,—

" ' It happened in casting parts for the new opera, Signor Beneditti conceived he had been greatly injured, and applied to the board of directors

* *The Theatre.* From Tuesday, March 8th, to Saturday March 12th, 1720.

for redress. He set forth in the recitative tone, the nearest approaching to ordinary speech, that he had never acted anything in any other opera below the character of a sovereign, and now he was to be appointed to be captain of a guard. On these representations, we directed that he should make love to Zenobia, with proper limitations. The chairman signified to him that the board had made him a lover, but he must be content to be an unfortunate one, and be rejected by his mistress. He expressed himself very easy under this, and seemed to rejoice that, considering the inconstancy of women, he could only feign, not pursue the passion to extremity. He muttered very much against making him only the guard to the character he had formerly appeared in," &c.

A small and not uninteresting volume might be written about the caprices of singers and their behaviour under real or imaginary slights. One of the best stories of the kind is told of Crescentini, who, three-quarters of a century later, at the first representation of *Gli Orazi e Curiazi*, observed immediately before the commencement of the performance, that the costume of *Orazio* was more magnificent than his own. He sent for the stage manager, and burning with rage, addressed him as follows:—

"*Perche,*" he commenced, "*avez vous donné oun habit blanc à ce mossiou; et che vous m'en avez gratifié d'oun vert?*"

It was explained to the singer that there was a

tradition at the Comédie Française by which the costume of the principal Horatius was white and that of the chief of the Curiatii, green.

"*Perché la bordoure rouze à un primo tenore, el la bordoure noire à oun primo virtuoso ?*" continued the incensed sopranist.

"No one was thinking," replied the stage manager, "of your positions as singers; our only object was to make the costumes as correct as possible."

"Votre ousaze et votre ezatitoude sont des imbéciles," exclaimed Crescentini; "*zé mé lagnèrai* de votre condouite envers moi. Quant à vous, *mossiou Brizzi fate-mi il piacere* dé vous déshabiller *subito* et dé mé fairé passer *questo vestito in baratto* dou mien qué zé vais vous envoyer. *Per Bacco!* non si dirà qu'oun tenore aura parou miou vétou qu'oun primo ouno, surtout quand ce *primo virtuoso* est Girolamo Crescentini d'Urbino."

An exchange took place on the spot, and throughout the evening a Curiatius, six feet high, was seen wearing a little Roman costume, which looked as if it would burst with each movement of the singer, while a diminutive Horatius was attired in a long Alban tunic, of which the skirt trailed along the ground.

But the singers are taking us away from the Opera. Let us return to Handel, all of whose vocalists together, admirable as they were, could not save the Royal Academy of Music from ruin. After the final failure of that enterprise in 1728, the directors

entered into an arrangement with Heidegger for opening the King's Theatre under their joint management. Handel went to Italy to engage new singers, but did not make a very brilliant selection. Heidegger, nevertheless, did his duty as a manager, and introduced the principal members of the new company to public notice in the following "puff direct," which, for cool unadorned impudence, has not been surpassed even in the present day. "Mr. Handel, who is just returned from Italy, has contracted with the following persons to perform in the Italian Operas, Signor Bernacchi, who is esteemed the best singer in Italy; Signora Merighi, a woman of a very fine presence, an excellent actress, and a very good singer, with a counter-tenor voice; Signora Strada, who hath a very fine treble voice, a person of singular merit; Signor Annibale Pio Fabri, a most excellent tenor, and a fine voice; his wife, who performs a man's part well; Signora Bertoldi, who has a very fine treble voice, she is also a very genteel actress, both in men and women's parts; a bass voice, from Hamburgh, there being none worth engaging in Italy."

I fancy this was an attempt to carry on Italian Opera at a reduced expenditure, for as soon as the speculation began to fail, the popular Senesino was again engaged. Handel had had a serious quarrel with this singer, but when a manager is in want of a star, and a star is tempted with a lucrative engagement, personal feelings are not taken into account. They ought to have been, however, in this particular

case, at least by Handel, for the breach between the composer and the singer was renewed, and Senesino left the King's Theatre to join the company which was being formed at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre, under the direction of Porpora.

Handel now set out once more for Italy, but again failed to engage any singers of celebrity, with the exception of Carestini, whom he heard at Bologna at the same time as Farinelli. That he should have preferred the former to the latter seems unaccountable, for by the common consent of musicians, critics, and the public, Farinelli, wherever he sang, was pronounced the greatest singer of his time, and it appears certain that no singer ever affected an audience in so powerful a manner. The passionate (and slightly blasphemous) exclamation of the entranced Englishwoman, "One God and one Farinelli," together with the almost magical effect of Farinelli's voice in tranquilising the half demented Ferdinand VI., seems to show that his singing must have been something like the music of patriarchal times; which charmed serpents, and which in a later age throws highly impressionable women into convulsions.

I have already mentioned that in going or returning to Italy this last time, Handel appears to have passed through Paris, and to have paid a contemptuous sort of attention to French music. It is then, if ever, that he should be accused of having stolen for our national anthem, an air left by Lulli—which *he* did not, and which Lulli *could* not have com-

posed. The ridiculous story which would make our English patriotic hymn an adaptation from the French, is told for the first time I believe in the Duchess of Perth's letters. But instead of "*God save the Queen*" being translated from a canticle sung by the Ladies of St. Cyr, the pretended canticle is a translation of "God save the Queen." Here is the French version—

"Grand Dieu, sauvez le Roi!
Grand Dieu, vengez le Roi!
Vive le Roi!
Que toujours glorieux
Louis victorieux
Voie ses ennemis
Toujours soumis.

If it could be proved that this "canticle" was sung by the Ladies of St. Cyr, England could no longer claim the authorship of "*God save the Queen*," as far, at least, as the words are concerned; and it is evident that the words, which are scarcely readable as poetry, though excellent for singing, were written either for or with the music. M. Castil Blaze, however (in *Molière Musicien*, Vol. I., page 501), points out that "*si l'on ignorait que la musique de cet air est, non pas de Handel, comme plusieurs l'ont assuré mais de Henri Carey la version Française prouverait du moins que cette mélodie, scandée en sdruccioli ne peut appartenir au siècle de Louis XIV.; nos vers à glissades étaient parfaitement inconnus de Quinault et de Lulli, de Bernard et de Rameau.*"

Mr. Schœlcher, like many other writers, attributes "*God save the King*" to Dr. John Bull, but

Mr. W. Chappell, in his "Popular Music of the Olden Time," has shown that Dr. John Bull did not compose it in its present form, and that in all probability Henry Carey did, and that words and music together, as we know it in the present day, our national anthem dates only from 1740. Lulli did not compose it, but it was not composed before his time, nor before Handel's either. The air has been so altered, or rather, developed, by the various composers who have handled it since a simple chant on the four words "God save the King" was harmonised by Dr. John Bull, and afterwards converted from an indifferent tune into an admirable one (through the fortunate blundering of a copyist, as it has been surmised), that it may almost be said to have grown. What an interesting thing to be able to establish the fact of its gradual formation, like the political system of that nation to whose triumphs it has long been an indispensable accompaniment! But how humiliating to find that somebody marked in Dr. Bull's manuscript a sharp where there should have been no sharp, and that our glorious anthem owes its existence to a mistake! Mr. Chappell prints three or four ballads and part songs in his work, beginning at the reign of James I., either or all of which may have been the foundation of "*God save the King*," but it appears certain that our national hymn in its present form was first sung, and almost note for note as it is sung now, by H. Carey, in 1740, in

celebration of the taking of Portobello by Admiral Vernon.*

Handel did not compose "*God save the King*;" but he had good reason for singing it, considering the steady and liberal patronage he received from our three first Georges. When, after the expiration of his contract with Heidegger, he removed to Covent Garden, in 1735, still carrying on the war against Porpora (who removed at the same time to the King's Theatre), George II. subscribed £1,000 towards the expenses of Handel's management, and it was the support of the King and the Royal Family that enabled him to combat the influence that was brought to bear against him by the aristocracy. Handel, according to Arbuthnot, owed his failure, in a great measure, the first time, to the *Beggars' Opera*. The second time, on the other hand, it was the *Nobility's Opera* that ruined him. Handel, as we have seen, had only Carestini to depend upon. Porpora, his rival, had secured two established favourites, Cuzzoni and Senesino (both members of Handel's old company at the Academy), and had, moreover, engaged Farinelli, by far the greatest singer of the epoch. Nevertheless, Porpora failed almost at the same time as Handel, and at the end of the year 1737, there was no Italian Opera at all in London.

Handel joined Heidegger once more in 1738, at the King's Theatre. In two years he wrote four operas, of which the fourth, *Deidamia*, was the

* See a letter of Dr. Harrington's (referred to by Mr. Chappell), in the *Monthly Magazine*, Vol. XI., page 386.

last he ever produced. After this he abandoned dramatic music, and, as a composer of Oratorios, entered upon what was to him a far higher career. Handel was at this time fifty-six years of age, and since his arrival in England, in 1711, he had written no less than thirty-five Italian operas.

Handel's Italian operas, as such, are now quite obsolete. The air from *Admeto* is occasionally heard at a concert, and Handel is known to have introduced some of his operatic melodies into his Oratorios, but there is no chance of any one of his operas ever being reproduced in a complete form. They were never known out of England, and in this country were soon laid aside after their composer had fairly retired from theatrical management. I think Mr. Hogarth * is only speaking with his usual judiciousness, when he observes, that "whatever pleasure they must have given to the audiences of that age, they would fail to do so now. The music of the principal parts," he continues, "were written for a class of voices which no longer exists,† and for these parts no performers could now be found. A series of recitatives and airs, with only an occasional duet, and a concluding chorus of the slightest kind, would appear meagre and dull to ears

* "Memoirs of the Opera," Vol. I., page 371.

† The sopranists—a species of singers which ceased to be "formed" after Pope Clement XIV. sanctioned the introduction of female vocalists into the churches of Rome, and at the same time recommended theatrical directors to have women's parts in their operas performed by women. This was in 1769.

accustomed to the brilliant concerted pieces and finales of the modern stage; and Handel's accompaniments would appear thin and poor amidst the richness and variety of the modern orchestra. The vocal parts, too, are to a great extent, in an obsolete taste. Many of the airs are mere strings of dry, formal divisions and unmeaning passages of execution, calculated to show off the powers of the fashionable singers; and many others, admirable in their design, and containing the finest traits of melody and expression, are spun out a wearisome length, and deformed by the cumbrous trappings with which they are loaded. Musical phrases, too, when Handel used them, had the charm of novelty, have become familiar and common through repetition by his successors."

Among the airs which Handel has taken from his Operas and introduced into his Oratorios, may be mentioned *Rendi l' sereno al ciglio*, from *Sosarme*, now known as *Lord, remember David*, and *Dove sei amato bene*, in *Rodelinda*, which has been converted into *Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty*. That these changes have been made with perfect success, proves, if any proof were still wanted by those who have ever given a minute's consideration to the subject, that there is no such thing as absolute definite expression in music. The music of an impassioned love song will seem equally appropriate as that of a fervent prayer, except to those who have already associated it intimately in their memories with the words to which

it has first been written. A positive feeling of joy, or of grief, of exultation, or of depression, of liveliness, or of solemnity, can be expressed by musical means without the assistance of words, but not mixed feelings, into which several shades of sentiment enter—at least not with definiteness; though once indicated by the words, they will obtain from music the most admirable colours which will even appear to have been invented expressly and solely for them. Gluck arranged old music to suit new verses quite as much, or more, than Handel—even Gluck who maintained that music ought to convey the precise signification, not only of a dramatic situation, but of the very words of a song, phrase by phrase, if not word by word.

During the period of Handel's presidency over our Italian Opera, works not only by Handel and his colleagues, but also by Scarlatti, Hasse, Porpora, Vinci, Veracini, and other composers were produced at the King's Theatre, at Covent Garden, and at Porpora's Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. After Handel's retirement, operas by Galuppi, Pergolesi, Jomelli, Gluck, and Piccinni, were performed, and the most distinguished singers in Europe continued to visit London. In 1741, when the Earl of Middlesex undertook the management of the King's Theatre, Galuppi was engaged as composer, and produced several operas: among others, *Penelope*, *Scipione*, and *Enrico*. In 1742, the *Olimpiade*, with music by Pergolese (a pupil of Hasse, and the future composer

of the celebrated *Serva Padrona*) was brought out. After Galuppi's return to Italy, in 1744, the best of his new operas continued to be produced in London. His *Mondo della Luna* was represented in 1760, when the English public were delighted with the gaiety of the music, and with the charming acting and singing of Signora Paganini. The year afterwards a still greater success was achieved with the same composer's *Filosofo di Campagna*, which, says Dr. Burney, "surpassed in musical merit all the comic operas that were performed in England till the *Buona Figliola*." Not only were Gluck's earlier and comparatively unimportant works performed in London soon after their first production at Vienna, but his *Orfeo*, the first of those great works written in the style which we always associate with Gluck's name, was represented in London in 1770, four years before Gluck went to Paris. Indeed, ever since the arrival of Handel in this country, London has been celebrated for its Italian Opera, whereas the French had no regular continuous performances of Italian Opera until nearly a hundred years afterwards. Handel did much to create a taste for this species of entertainment, and by the excellent execution which he took care every opera produced under his direction should receive, he set an example to his successors of which the value can scarcely be over-estimated, and which it must be admitted has, on the whole, been followed with intelligence and enterprise.

CHAPTER VII.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE OPERA IN EUROPE IN THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY UNTIL THE APPEARANCE OF
GLUCK.

Great Italian Singers.—Ferri in Sweden.—Opera in Vienna.—
Scenic decorations.—Singers of the Eighteenth Century.—Singers'
nicknames.—Farinelli's one note.

HANDEL, by his great musical genius, conferred a two-fold benefit on the country of his adoption. He endowed it with a series of Oratorios which stand alone in their grandeur, for which the English of the present day are deeply grateful, and for which ages to come will honour his name; and before writing a note of his great sacred works, during the thirty years which he devoted to the production and superintendence of Italian Opera in England, he raised that entertainment to a pitch of excellence unequalled elsewhere, except perhaps at the magnificent Dresden Theatre, which, for upwards of a quarter of a century was directed by the celebrated Hasse, and where Augustus, of Saxony, took care that the finest musicians and singers in Europe should be engaged.

Rousseau, in the *Dictionnaire Musicale*, under the head of "Orchestra," writing in 1754*, says:—

"The first orchestra in Europe in respect to the number and science of the symphonists, is that of Naples. But the orchestra of the opera of the King of Poland, at Dresden, directed by the illustrious Hasse, is better distributed, and forms a better *ensemble*."

Most of Handel's and Porpora's best vocalists were engaged from the Dresden Theatre, but the great Italian singers had already become citizens of the world, and settled or established themselves temporarily as their interests dictated in Germany, England, Spain, or elsewhere, and at the beginning of the eighteenth century there were Italian Operas at Naples, Turin, Dresden, Vienna, London, Madrid, and even Algiers—everywhere but in France, which, as has already been pointed out, did not accept the musical civilisation of Italy until it had been adopted by every other country in Europe, including Russia. The great composers, and above all, the great singers who abounded in this fortunate century, went to and fro in Europe, from south to north, from east to west, and were welcomed everywhere but in Paris, where, until a few years before the Revolution, it seemed to form part of the national honour to despise Italian music.

As far back as 1645, Queen Christina of Sweden

* The *Dictionnaire Musicale* was not published until some years afterwards.

sent a vessel of war to Italy, to bring to her Court Balthazar Ferri, the most distinguished singer of his day. Ferri, as Rousseau, quoting from Mancini, tells us in his "Musical Dictionary," could without taking breath ascend and descend two octaves of the chromatic scale, performing a shake on every note unaccompanied, and with such precision that if at any time the note on which the singer was shaking was verified by an instrument, it was found to be perfectly in tune.

Ferri was in the service of three kings of Poland and two emperors of Germany. At Venice he was decorated with the Order of St. Mark; at Vienna he was crowned King of Musicians; at London, while he was singing in a masque, he was presented by an unknown hand with a superb emerald; and the Florentines, when he was about to visit their city, went in thousands to meet him, at three leagues distance from the gates.

The Italian Opera was established in Vienna under the Emperor Leopold I., with great magnificence, so much so indeed, that for many years afterwards it was far more celebrated as a spectacle than as a musical entertainment. Nevertheless, Leopold was a most devoted lover of music, and remained so until his death, as the history of his last moments sufficiently shows. We have seen a French maid of honour die to the fiddling of her page; the Emperor of Germany expired to the accompaniment of a full orchestra. Feeling that his end was approaching he sent for his

musicians, and ordered them to commence a symphony, which they went on playing until he died.

Apostolo Zeno, whom Rousseau calls the Corneille, and Metastasio, whom he terms the Racine of the Opera, both resided for many years at Vienna, and wrote many of their best pieces for its theatre. Several of Zeno's, and a great number of Metastasio's works have been set to music over and over again, but when they were first brought out at Vienna, many of them appear to have obtained success more as grand dramatic spectacles than as operas. During the latter half of the eighteenth century, Vienna witnessed the production of some of the greatest master-pieces of the musical drama (for instance, the *Orpheus*, *Alcestis*, &c., of Gluck, and the *Marriage of Figaro*, of Mozart); but when Handel was in England directing the King's Theatre in the Haymarket, and when the Dresden Opera was in full musical glory (before as well as after the arrival of Hasse), the Court Theatre of Vienna was above all remarkable for its immense size, for the splendour of its decorations, and for the general costliness and magnificence of its spectacles. Lady Mary Wortley Montague visited the Opera, at Vienna, in 1716, and sent the following account of it to Pope.

"I have been last Sunday at the Opera, which was performed in the garden of the Favorita; and I was so much pleased with it, I have not yet repented my seeing it. Nothing of the kind was ever more magnificent, and I can easily believe what I am told, that

the decorations and habits cost the Emperor thirty thousand pounds sterling. The stage was built over a very large canal, and at the beginning of the second act divided into two parts, discovering the water, on which there immediately came, from different parts, two fleets of little gilded vessels that gave the representation of a naval fight. It is not easy to imagine the beauty of this scene, which I took particular notice of. But all the rest were perfectly fine in their kind. The story of the Opera is the enchantment of Alcina, which gives opportunities for a great variety of machines, and changes of scenes which are performed with surprising swiftness. The theatre is so large that it is hard to carry the eye to the end of it, and the habits in the utmost magnificence to the number of one hundred and eight. No house could hold such large decorations; but the ladies all sitting in the open air exposes them to great inconveniences, for there is but one canopy for the Imperial Family, and the first night it was represented, a shower of rain happening, the opera was broken off, and the company crowded away in such confusion that I was almost squeezed to death."

One of these open air theatres, though doubtless on a much smaller scale than that of Vienna, stood in the garden of the Tuileries, at Paris, at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was embowered in trees and covered with creeping plants, and the performances took place there in the day-time. These

garden theatres were known to the Romans, witness the following lines of Ovid :—

“ Illic quas tulerant nemorosa palatia, frondes
Simpliciter positæ ; scena sine arte fuit.”

De Arte Amandi, Liber I., v. 105.

I myself saw a little theatre of the kind, in 1856, at Flensburg, in Denmark. There was a pleasure-ground in front, with benches and chairs for the audience. The stage door at the back opened into a cabbage garden. The performances, which consisted of a comedy and farce took place in the afternoon, and ended at dusk.

I have already spoken of the magnificence and perfection of the scenic pictures exhibited at the Italian theatres in the very first days of the Opera. In the early part of the seventeenth century immense theatres were constructed so as to admit of the most elaborate spectacular displays. The Farnesino Theatre, at Parma, built for dramas, tournaments, and spectacles of all kinds, and which is now a ruin, contained at least fifty thousand spectators.*

In the 18th century the Italians seem to have thought more of the music of their operas, and to have left the vanities of theatrical decorations to the Germans.

Servandoni, for some time scene painter and decorator at the Académie Royale of Paris not

* *Le Vieux Neuf*, par Edouard Fournier, t. ii., p. 293.

finding that theatre sufficiently vast for his designs, sought a new field for his ambition at the Opera-House of Dresden, where Augustus of Poland engaged him to superintend the arrangement of the stage. Servandoni painted a number of admirable scenes for this theatre, in the midst of which four hundred mounted horsemen were able to manœuvre with ease.

In 1760 the Court of the Duke of Wurtemberg, at Stuttgart, was the most brilliant in Europe, owing partly, no doubt, to the enormous subsidies received by the Duke from France for a body of ten thousand men, which he maintained at the service of that power. The Duke had a French theatre, and two Italian theatres, one for Opera Seria, and the other for Opera Buffa. The celebrated Noverre was his ballet-master, and there were a hundred dancers in the *corps de ballet*, besides twenty principal ones, each of whom had been first dancer at one of the chief theatres of Italy. Jomelli was chapel-master and director of the Opera at Stuttgart from 1754 until 1773.

In the way of stage decorations, theatrical effects, and the various other spectacular devices by which managers still seek to attract to their Operas those who are unable to appreciate good music, we have made no progress since the 17th century. We have, to be sure, gas and the electric light, which were not known to our forefathers ; but St. Evrémond tells us that in Louis the XIV.'s time the sun and moon were

so well represented at the Académie Royale, that the Ambassador of Guinea, assisting at one of its performances, leant forward in his box, when those orbs appeared and religiously saluted them. To be sure, this anecdote may be classed with one I have heard in Russia, of an actor who, playing the part of a bear in a grand melodrama, in which a storm was introduced, crossed himself devoutly at each clap of thunder; but the stories of Servandoni's and Bernino's decorations are no fables. Like the other great masters of stage effect in Italy, Bernino was an architect, a sculptor and a painter. His sunsets are said to have been marvellous; and in a spectacular piece of his composition, entitled *The Inundation of the Tiber*, a mass of water was seen to come in from the back of the stage, gradually approaching the orchestra and washing down everything that impeded its onward course, until at last the audience, believing the inundation to be real, rose in terror and were about to rush from the theatre. Traps, however, were ready to be opened in all parts of the stage. The Neptune of the troubled theatrical waves gave the word,

— "*et dicto citius tumida æquora placat.*"

But in Italy, even at the time when such wonders were being effected in the way of stage decorations, the music of an opera was still its prime attraction; indeed, there were theatres for operas and theatres for spectacular dramas, and it is a mistake to attempt the union of the two in any great excel-

lence, inasmuch as the one naturally interferes with and diverts attention from the other.

Of Venice and its music, in the days when grand hunts, charges of cavalry, triumphal processions in which hundreds of horsemen took part, and ships traversing the ocean, and proceeding full sail to the discovery of America were introduced on to the stage;* of Venice and its music even at this highly decorative period, St. Evrémond has given us a brief but very satisfactory account in the following doggrel:—

“A Venise rien n'est égal :
Sept opéras, le carnaval ;
Et la merveille, l'excellence,
Point de chœurs et jamais de danse,
Dans les maisons, souvent concert,
Où tout se chante à livre ouvert.”

The operatic chorus, as has already been observed, is an invention claimed by the French †; on the other hand, from the very foundation of the Académie Royale, the French rendered their Operas ridiculous by introducing *ballets* into the middle of them. We shall find Rousseau calling attention to this absurd custom which still prevails at the Académie, where if even *Fidelio* was to be produced, it would be considered necessary to “enliven” one or more of the scenes with a *divertissement*—so unchanging and unchangeable are the revolutionary French in all that is futile.

* See *Molière Musicien*, by Castil Blaze; t. ii., p. 26.

† Choruses were introduced in the earliest Italian Operas, but they do not appear to have formed essential parts of the dramas represented.

We have seen that in the first years of the 18th century, the Opera at Vienna was chiefly remarkable for its size, and the splendour and magnificence of its scenery. But it soon became a first-rate musical theatre; and it was there, as every one who takes an interest in music knows, that nearly all the masterpieces of Gluck and Mozart* were produced. The French sometimes speak of Gluck's great works as if they belonged exclusively to the repertory of their Académie. I have already mentioned that four years before Gluck went to Paris (1774), his *Orfeo* was played in London. This opera was brought out at Vienna in 1764, when it was performed twenty-eight times in succession. The success of *Alceste* was still greater; and after its production in 1768, no other opera was played for two years. At this period, the imperial family did not confine the interest they took in the Opera to mere patronage; four Austrian archduchesses, sisters of the Emperor Charles VII., themselves appeared on the stage, and performed, among other pieces, in the *Egeria* of Metastasio and Hasse, and even in Gluck's works. Charles VII. himself played on the harpsichord and the violoncello; and the Empress mother, then seventy years of age, once said, in conversing with Faustina (Hasse's widow at that time), "I am the oldest dramatic singer in Europe; I made my *début* when I was five years old." Charles VI.

* With the important exception, however, of *Don Giovanni*, written for, and performed for the first time, at Prague.

too, Leopold's successor, if not a musician, had, at least, considerable taste in music; and Farinelli informed Dr. Burney that he was much indebted to this sovereign for an admonition he once received from him. The Emperor told the singer that his performance was surprising, and, indeed, prodigious; but that all was unavailing as long as he did not succeed in touching the heart. It would appear that at this time Farinelli's style was wanting in simplicity and expressiveness; but an artist of the intelligence and taste which his correspondence with Metastasio proves him to have possessed, would be sure to correct himself of any such failings the moment his attention was called to them.

The 18th century produced a multitude of great singers. Their voices have gone with them; but we know from the music they sang, from the embellishments and cadences which have been noted down, and which are as good evidence now as when they were first executed, that those *virtuosi* had brought the vocal art to a perfection of which, in these later days, we meet with only the rarest examples. Is music to be written for the sake of singers, or are singers to learn to sing for the sake of music? Of the two propositions, I decidedly prefer the latter; but it must, at the same time, be remarked, that unless the executive qualities of the singer be studied to a considerable extent, the singer will soon cease to pay much attention to his execution. Continue to give him singable music, however difficult, and he

will continue to learn to sing, counting the difficulties to be overcome only as so many opportunities for new triumphs ; but if the music given to him is such as can, perhaps even *must*, be shouted, it is to be expected that he will soon cease to study the intricacies and delicacies of his art ; and in time, if music truly vocal be put before him, he will be unable to sing.

The great singers of the 17th century, to judge from the cantilenas of Caccini's, Peri's, and Monteverde's operas, must have cultivated expression rather than ornamentation ; though what Mancini tells us about the singing of Balthazar Ferri, and the manner in which it was received, proves that the florid, highly-adorned style was also in vogue. These early Italian *virtuosi* (a name which they adopted at the beginning of the 17th century to distinguish themselves from mere-actors) not only possessed great acquirements as singers, but were also excellent musicians ; and many of them displayed great ability in matters quite unconnected with their profession. Stradella, the only vocalist of whom it is recorded that his singing saved his life, composed an opera, *La Forza dell Amor paterno*, of which the manifold beauties caused him to be proclaimed " beyond comparison the first Apollo of music : " the following inscription being stamped by authority on the published score—" *Bastando il dirti, che il concerto di si perfetta melodia sia valore d'un Alessandro, civè del Signor Stradella, riconosciuto senza contrasto per il primo Apollo della musica.*" Atto, an Italian tenor,

who came to Paris with Leonora Baroni, and who had apartments given him in Cardinal Mazarin's palace, was afterwards entrusted by that minister with a political mission to the court of Bavaria, which, however, it must be remembered, was just then presided over, not by an elector, but by an electoress. Farinelli became the confidential adviser, if not the actual minister (as has been often stated, but without foundation) of the king of Spain. In the present day, the only *virtuoso* I know of (the name has now a more general signification) who has been entrusted with *quasi*-diplomatic functions is Vivier, the first horn player, and, in his own way, the first humorist of the age; I believe it is no secret that this facetious *virtuoso* fills the office of secretary to his Excellency Vely Pasha.

Bontempi, in his *Historia Musica*, gives the following account of the school of singing directed by Mazzocchi, at Rome, in 1620: "At the schools of Rome, the pupils were obliged to give up one hour every day to the singing of difficult passages till they were well acquainted with them; another to the practice of the shake; another to feats of agility;* another to the study of letters; another to vocal exercises, under the direction of a master, and before a looking-glass, so that they might be certain they were making no disagreeable movement of the muscles of the face, of the forehead, of the eyes, or of the mouth. So much for the occupation of the morning. In the afternoon,

* Vocal agility, not gymnastics.

half-an-hour was devoted to the theory of singing ; another half-hour to counterpoint ; an hour to hearing the rules of composition, and putting them in practice on their tablets ; another to the study of letters ; and the rest of the day to practising the harpsichord, to the composition of some psalm, motet, canzonetta, or any other piece according to the scholar's own ideas.

"Such were the ordinary exercises of the school in days when the scholars did not leave the house. When they went out, they often walked towards Monte-Mario, and sang where they could hear the echo of their notes, so that each might judge by the response of the justness of his execution. They, moreover, sang at all the musical solemnities of the Roman Churches ; following, and observing with attention the manner and style of an infinity of great singers who lived under the pontificate of Urban VIII., so that they could afterwards render an account of their observations to the master, who, the better to impress the result of these studies on the minds of his pupils, added whatever remarks and cautions he thought necessary."

With such a system as the above, it would have been impossible, supposing the students to have possessed any natural disposition for singing, not to have produced good singers. We have spoken already of some of the best vocalists of the 18th century ; of Faustina, Cuzzoni, and Mingotti ; of Nicolini, Senesino, and Farinelli. Of Farinelli's life, however (which was so interesting that it has afforded to a

German composer the subject of one opera, to M. M. Scribe and Auber, that of another, *La part du Diable*, and to M. Scribe the plan of "*Carlo Broschi*," a tale), I must give a few more particulars; and this will also be a convenient opportunity for sketching the careers of some two or three others of the great Italian singers of this epoch, such as Caffarelli, Gabrielli, Guadagni, &c.

First, as to his name. It is generally said that Carlo Broschi owed his appellation of Farinelli to the circumstance of his father having been a miller, or a flour merchant. This, however, is pure conjecture. No one knows or cares who Carlo Broschi's father was, but he was called "Farinelli," because he was the recognised *protégé* of the Farina family; just as another singer, who was known to be one of Porpora's favorite pupils, was named "Porporino."

Descriptive nicknames were given to the celebrated musicians as well as to the celebrated painters of Italy. Numerous composers and singers owed their sobriquets

TO THEIR NATIVE COUNTRY; as—

Il Sassone (Hasse), born at Bergendorf, in Saxony;
Portogallo (Simao);
Lo Spagnuolo (Vincent Martin);
L'Inglesina (Cecilia Davies);

La Francesina (Elizabeth Duparc), who, after singing for some years with success in Italy and at London, was engaged by Handel in 1745, to take the principal soprano parts in his oratorios :

TO THEIR NATIVE TOWN ; as—

Buranello, of Burano (Galuppi);

Pergolese, of Pergola (Jesi);

La Ferrarese, of Ferrara (Francesca Gabrielli);

Senesino, of Sienna (Bernardi):

TO THE PROFESSION OF THEIR PARENTS ; as—

La Cochetta (Catarina), whose father was cook to Prince Gabrielli, at Rome :

TO THE PLACE THEY INHABITED ; as—

Checça della Laguna, (Francesca of the Lagune) :

TO THE NAME OF THEIR MASTER ; as—

Caffarelli (Majorano), pupil of Caffaro ;

Gizziello (Conti), pupil of Gizzi ;

Porporino (Hubert), pupil of Porpora :

TO THE NAME OF THEIR PATRON ; as—

Farinelli (Carlo Broschi), protected by the Farinas, of Naples ;

Gabrielli (Catarina), protected by Prince Gabrielli;
Cusanimo (Carestini), protected by the Cusani
family of Milan :

TO THE PART IN WHICH THEY HAD PARTICULARLY
DISTINGUISHED THEMSELVES ; as—

Siface (Grossi), who had obtained a triumphant
success, as that personage, in Scarlatti's *Mitridate*.

But the most astonishing of all these nicknames
was that given to Lucrezia Aguiari, who, being a
natural child, was called publicly, in the playbills and
in the newspapers, *La Bastardina*, or *La Bastardella*.

Catarina, called Gabrielli, a singer to be ranked
with the Faustinas and Cuzzonis, naturally became
disgusted with her appellation of *la cocchetta* (little
cook) as soon as she had acquired a little celebrity.
She accordingly assumed the name of Prince Gabrielli,
her patron ; Francesca Gabrielli, who was in no way
related to the celebrated Catarina, keeping to that of
Ferrarese, or *Gabriellina*, as she was sometimes called.

But to return to my short anecdotal biographies of
a few of these singers.* Carlo Broschi, then, called
"Farinelli," first distinguished himself, at the age of
seventeen, in a bravura with an *obligato* trumpet
accompaniment, which Porpora, his master, wrote
expressly for him, and for a German trumpet-player

* Of Faustina and Cuzzoni, whose histories are so intimately con-
nected with that of the Royal Academy of Music, I have spoken in
the preceding chapter on "The Italian Opera under Handel."

whose skill on that instrument was prodigious. The air commenced with a sustained note, given by the trumpet. This note was then taken up by the vocalist, who held it with consummate art for such a length of time that the audience fell into raptures with the beauty and fulness of his voice. The note was then attacked, and held successively by the player and the singer, *pianissimo*, *crescendo*, *forte*, *fortissimo*, *diminuendo*, *smorzando*, *perdendosi*—of which the effect may be imagined from the delirious transports of the lady who, on hearing this one note several times repeated, hastened to proclaim in the same breath the unity of the Deity and the uniqueness of Farinelli. This trumpet song occurs originally in Porpora's *Eomene*; and Farinelli sang it for the first time at Rome, in 1722. In London, in 1734, he introduced it in Hasse's *Artaserse*, the opera in which he made his *début*, at the Lincoln's Inn Theatre, under the direction of Porpora, his old preceptor.

I, who have heard a good many fine singers, and one or two whose voices I shall not easily forget, must confess myself unable to understand the enthusiasm caused by Farinelli's one note, however wonderful the art that produced it, however exquisite the gradations of sound which gave it colour, and perhaps a certain appearance of life; for one musical sound is, after all, not music. Bilboquet, in Dumersan and Varin's admirable burlesque comedy of *Les Saltimbanques*, would, perhaps, have understood it; and, really, when I read of the effect Farinelli produced

by keeping to one note, I cannot help thinking of the directions given by the old humorist and scoundrel to an incompetent *débutant* on the trombone. The amateur has the instrument put into his hands, and, with great difficulty, succeeds in bringing out one note; but, to save his life, he could not produce two. "Never mind," says Bilboquet, "one note is enough. Keep on playing it, and people who are fond of that note will be delighted." How little the authors of *Les Saltimbanques* knew that one note had delighted and enchanted thousands! Not only is truth stranger than fiction, but reality is more grotesque even than a burlesque fancy.

Farinelli visited Paris in 1737, and sang before Louis XV., who, according to Riccoboni, was delighted, though His Majesty cared very little for music, and least of all for Italian music. It is also said that, on the whole, Farinelli was by no means satisfied with his reception in Paris, nor with the general distaste of the French for the music of his country; and some writers go so far as to maintain that the ill-will he always showed to France during his residence, in a confidential position, at the Court of Madrid, was attributable to his irritating recollections of his visit to the French capital. In 1752, the Duke de Duras was charged with a secret mission to the Spanish Court (concerning an alliance with France), which is supposed to have miscarried through the influence of Farinelli; but there were plenty of good reasons, independently of any personal dislike

he may have had for the French, for advising Ferdinand VI. to maintain his good understanding with the cabinets of Vienna, London, and Turin.

Ferdinand's favourite singer remained ten years in his service; soothing and consoling him with his songs, and, after a time, giving him valuable political advice. Farinelli's quasi-ministerial functions did not prevent him from continuing to sing every day. Every day, for ten years, the same thing! Or rather, the same things, for His Majesty's particular collection included as many as four different airs. Two of them were by Hasse, *Pallido il sole* and *Per questo dolce amplesso*. The third was a minuet, on which Farinelli improvised variations. It has been calculated that during the ten years he sang the same airs, and never anything else, about three thousand six hundred times. If Ferdinand VI. had not, in the first instance, been half insane, surely this would have driven him mad.

Caffarelli, hearing of Farinelli's success at Madrid, is said to have made this curious observation: "He deserves to be Prime Minister; he has an admirable voice."

Caffarelli was regarded as Farinelli's rival; and some critics, including Porpora, who had taught both, considered him the greatest singer of the two. This sopranist was notorious for his intolerable insolence, of which numerous anecdotes are told. He would affect indisposition, when persons of great im-

portance were anxious to hear him sing, and had engaged him for that purpose. "Omnibus hoc vitium cantoribus;" but it may be said Caffarelli was capricious and overbearing to an unusual extent. Metastasio, in one of his letters, tells us that at a rehearsal which had been ordered at the Opera of Vienna, all the performers obeyed the summons except Caffarelli; he appeared, however, at the end of the rehearsal, and asked the company with a very disdainful air, "What was the use of these rehearsals?" The conductor answered, in a voice of authority, "that no one was called upon to account to him for what was done; that he ought to be glad that his failure in attendance had been suffered; that his presence or absence was of little consequence to the success of the opera; but that whatever he chose to do himself, he ought, at least, to let others do their duty." Caffarelli, in a great rage, exclaimed "that he who had ordered such a rehearsal was a solemn coxcomb." At this, all the patience and dignity of the poet forsook him; "and getting into a towering passion, he honoured the singer with all those glorious titles which Caffarelli had earned in various parts of Europe, and slightly touched, but in lively colours, some of the most memorable particulars of his life; nor was he likely soon to come to a close; but the hero of the panegyric, cutting the thread of his own praise, boldly called out to his eulogist: 'Follow me, if thou hast courage, to a place where there is none to assist

thee, * * * * * The bystanders tremble ; each calls on his tutelar saint, expecting every moment to see poetical and vocal blood besprinkle the harpsichords and double basses. But at length the Signora Tesi, rising from under her canopy, where, till now, she had remained a most tranquil spectator, walked with a slow and stately step towards the combatants ; when, O sovereign power of beauty ! the frantic Caffarelli, even in the fiercest paroxysm of his wrath, captivated and appeased by this unexpected tenderness, runs with rapture to meet her ; lays his sword at her feet ; begs pardon for his error ; and generously sacrificing to her his vengeance, seals, with a thousand kisses upon her hand, his protestations of obedience, respect and humility. The nymph signifies her forgiveness by a nod ; the poet sheathes his sword ; the spectators begin to breathe again ; and the tumultuous assembly breaks up amid the joyous sounds of laughter."

Of Caffarelli a curious, and as it seems to me fabulous, story is told to the effect that for five years Porpora allowed him to sing nothing but a series of scales and exercises, all of which were written down on one sheet of paper. According to this anecdote, Caffarelli, with a patience which did not distinguish him in after life, asked seriously after his five years' scale practice, when he was likely to get beyond the rudiments of his art,—upon which Porpora suddenly exclaimed :—"Young man you have nothing more to learn, you are the greatest singer in the world." In

London, however, coming after Farinelli, Caffarelli did not meet with anything like the same success.

At Turin, when the Prince of Savoy told Caffarelli, after praising him greatly, that the princess thought it hardly possible any singer could please after Farinelli, "To night," exclaimed the sopranist, in the fulness of his vanity, "she shall hear two Farinellis."

What would the English lady have said to this, who maintained that there was but "*one* Farinelli?"

At sixty-five years of age, Caffarelli was still singing; but he had made an enormous fortune—had purchased nothing less than a dukedom for his nephew, and had built himself a superb palace, over the entrance of which he placed the following modest inscription:—

"Amphion THEBAS, ego domum."

"Ille cum, sine tu!"

wrote a commentator beneath it.

Guadagni was the "creator" of the parts of *Telemacco* and *Orfeo*, in the operas by Gluck, bearing those names. He sang in London in 1766, at Venice the year afterwards, when he was made a Knight of St. Mark; at Potsdam before the King of Prussia, in 1776, &c. Guadagni amassed a large fortune, though he was at the same time noted for his generosity. He has the credit of having lent large sums of money to men of good family, who had ruined themselves. One of these impoverished gentlemen said, after borrowing the sum of a hundred sequins from him—

"I only want it as a loan, I shall repay you."

"That is not my intention," replied the singer ;
"if I wanted to have it back, I should not lend it to you."

Gabrielli (Catarina) is described by Brydone, in his tour through Sicily, in a letter, dated Palermo, July 27, 1770. She was at this time upwards of thirty, but on the stage appeared to be scarcely eighteen ; and Brydone considers her to have been "the most dangerous syren of modern times," adding, that she has made more conquests than any woman living. "She was wonderfully capricious," he continues, "and neither interest nor flattery, nor threats, nor punishment, had any power to control her. Instead of singing her airs as other actresses do, for the most part she hums them over *a mezza voce*, and no art whatever is capable of making her sing when she does not choose it. The most successful expedient has ever been found to prevail on her favourite lover (for she always has one) to place himself in the centre of the pit or the front box, and if they are on good terms, which is seldom the case, she will address her tender airs to him, and exert herself to the utmost. Her present innamorato promised to give us this specimen of his power over her. He took his seat accordingly, but Gabrielli, probably suspecting the connivance, would take no notice of him, so that even this expedient does not always succeed. The viceroy, who is fond of music, has tried every method with

her to no purpose. Some time ago he gave a great dinner, and sent an invitation to Gabrielli to be of the party. Every other person came at the hour of invitation. The viceroy ordered dinner to be put back, and sent to let her know that the company had all arrived. The messenger found her reading in bed. She said she was sorry for having made the company wait, and begged he would make her apology, but really she had entirely forgotten her engagement. The viceroy would have forgiven this piece of insolence, but when the company went to the Opera, Gabrielli repeated her part with the utmost negligence and indifference, and sang all her airs in what they call *sotto voce*, that is, so low that they can scarcely be heard. The viceroy was offended; but as he is a good tempered man, he was loth to enforce his authority; but at last, by a perseverance in this insolent stubbornness, she obliged him to threaten her with punishment in case she any longer refused to sing. On this she grew more obstinate than ever, declaring that force and authority would never succeed with her; that he might make her cry, but never could make her sing. The viceroy then sent her to prison, where she remained twelve days; during which time she gave magnificent entertainments every day, paid the debts of all the poor prisoners, and distributed large sums in charity. The viceroy was obliged to give up struggling with her, and she was at last set at liberty amidst the acclamations of the poor."

Gabrielli said at this time that she should never dare to appear in England, alleging as her reason that if, in a fit of caprice, which might at any time attack her, she refused to sing, or lost her temper and insulted the audience, they were said to be so ferocious that they would probably murder her. She asserted, however, and, doubtless, with truth, that it was not always caprice which prevented her singing, and that she was often really indisposed and unable to sing, when the public imagined that she absented herself from the theatre from caprice alone.

Mingotti used to say that the London public would admit that any one might have a cold, a head-ache, or a fever, except a singer. In the present day, our audiences often show the most unjustifiable anger because, while half the people in a concert room are coughing and sneezing, some favourite vocalist, with an exceptionally delicate larynx, is unable to sing an air, of which the execution would be sure to fatigue the voice even in its healthiest condition.

To Brydone's anecdotes of Gabrielli we may add another. The ambassador of France at the court of Vienna was violently in love with our capricious and ungovernable vocalist. In a fit of jealousy, he attempted to stab her, and Gabrielli was only saved from transfixion by the whalebone of her stays. As it was, she was slightly wounded. The ambassador threw himself at the singer's feet and obtained her

forgiveness, on condition of giving up his sword, on which the offended *prima donna* proposed to engrave the following words :—" *The sword of —, who on such a day in such a year, dared to strike La Gabrielli.*" Metastasio, however, succeeded in persuading her to abandon this intention.

In 1767 Gabrielli went to Parma, but wearied by the attentions of the Infant, Don Philip ("her accursed hunch back"—*gobbo maladetto*—as she called him), she escaped in secret the following year to St. Petersburg, where Catherine II. had invited her some time before. When the empress enquired what terms the celebrated singer expected, the sum of five thousand ducats was named.

"Five thousand ducats," replied Catherine; "not one of my field marshals receives so much."

"Her majesty had better ask her field marshals to sing," said Gabrielli.

Catherine gave the five thousand ducats. Whether the great Souvaroff's jealousy was excited, is not recorded.

At this time the composer Galuppi was musical director at the Russian court. He went to St. Petersburg in 1766, and had just returned when Dr. Burney saw him at Venice. Among the other great composers who visited Russia in Catherine's reign were Cimarosa and Paisiello, the latter of whom produced his *Barbiere di Siviglia*, at St. Petersburg, in 1780.

Most of the celebrated Italian vocalists of the 18th

century visited Vienna, Dresden, London and Madrid, as well as the principal cities of their own country, and sometimes even Paris, where both Farinelli and Caffarelli sang, but only at concerts. "I had hoped," says Rousseau, "that Caffarelli would give us at the 'Concert Spirituel' some specimen of grand recitative, and of the pathetic style of singing, that pretended connoisseurs might hear once for all what they have so often pronounced an opinion upon; but from his reasons for doing nothing of the kind I found that he understood his audience better than I did."

It was not until the accession of Frederick the Great, warrior, flute player, and severe protector of the arts in general, that the Italian Opera was established in Berlin; and it had been reserved for Catherine the Great to introduce it into St. Petersburg. In proportion as the Opera grew in Prussia and Russia it faded in Poland, and its decay at the court of the Elector of Saxony was followed shortly afterwards by the first signs of the infamous partition.

Frederick the Great's favourite composers were Hasse, Agricola, and Graun, the last of whom wrote a great number of Italian operas for the Berlin Theatre. When Dr. Burney was at Berlin, in 1772, there were fifty performers in the orchestra. There was a large chorus, and a numerous ballet, and several principal singers of great merit. The king defrayed the expenses of the whole establishment. He also officiated as general conductor, standing in

the pit behind the chef d'orchestre, so as to have a view of the score, and drilling his musical troops in true military fashion. We are told that if any mistake was committed on the stage, or in the orchestra, the king stopped the offender, and admonished him; and it is really satisfactory to know, that if a singer ventured to alter a single passage in his part (which almost every singer does in the present day) His Majesty severely reprimanded him, and ordered him to keep to the notes written by the composer. It was not the Opera of Paris, nor of London, nor of New York that should have been called the Academy, but evidently that of Berlin.

The celebrated Madame Mara sang for many years at the Berlin Opera. When her father Herr Schmaling first endeavoured to get her engaged by the king of Prussia, Frederick sent his principal singer Morelli to hear her and report upon her merits.

"She sings like a German," said the prejudiced Morelli, and the king, who declared that he should as soon expect to receive pleasure from the neighing of his horse as from a German singer, paid no further attention to Schmaling's application. The daughter, however, had heard of the king's sarcasm, and was determined to prove how ill-founded it was. Mademoiselle Schmaling made her *début* with great success at Dresden, and afterwards, in 1771, went to Berlin. The king, when the young vocalist was presented to him, after a few uncourteous observations, asked her if she could sing at sight, and placed before her a very

difficult bravura song. Mademoiselle Schmalzing executed it to perfection, upon which Frederick paid her a multitude of compliments, made her a handsome present, and appointed her *prima donna* of his company.

When Madame Mara in 1780 wished to visit England with her husband, (who was a dissipated violoncellist, belonging to the Berlin orchestra) the king positively prohibited their departure, and on their escaping to Vienna, sent a despatch to the Emperor Joseph II., requesting him to arrest the fugitives and send them back. The emperor, however, merely gave them a hint that they had better get out of Vienna as soon as possible, when he would inform the king that his messenger had arrived too late. Afterwards, as soon as it was thought she could do so with safety, Madame Mara made her appearance at the Viennese Opera and sang there with great success for nearly two years.

According to another version of Madame Mara's flight, she was arrested before she had passed the Prussian frontier, and separated from her husband, who was shut up in a fortress, and instead of performing on the violoncello in the orchestra of the Opera, was made to play the drum at the head of a regiment. The tears of the singer had no effect upon the inflexible monarch, and it was only by giving up a portion of her salary (so at least runs this anecdote of dubious authenticity) that she could obtain M. Mara's liberation. In any case it is certain that the position of this "*prima donna*" by no

means "*assoluta*," at the court of a very absolute king, was by no means an agreeable one, and that she had not occupied it many years before she endeavoured to liberate herself from it by every device in her power, including such disobedience of orders as she hoped would entail her prompt dismissal. On one occasion, when the Cæsarevitch, afterwards Paul I., was at Berlin, and Madame Mara was to take the principal part in an opera given specially in his honour, she pretended to be ill, and sent word to the theatre that she would be unable to appear. The king informed her on the morning of the day fixed for the performance that she had better get well, for that well or ill she would have to sing. Nevertheless Madame Mara remained at home and in bed. Two hours before the time fixed for the commencement of the opera, a carriage, escorted by a few dragoons, stopped at her door, and an officer entered her room to announce that he had orders from His Majesty to bring her alive or dead to the theatre.

"But you see I am in bed, and cannot get up," remonstrated the vocalist.

"In that case I must take the bed too," was the reply.

It was impossible not to obey. Bathed in tears she allowed herself to be taken to her dressing room, put on her costume, but resolved at the same time to sing in such a manner that the king should repent of his violence. She conformed to her determination throughout the first act, but it then occurred to her

that the Russian grand duke would carry away a most unworthy opinion of her talent. She quite changed her tactics, sang with all possible brilliancy, and is reported in particular to have sustained a shake for such a length of time and with such wonderful modulations of voice, that his Imperial Highness was enchanted, and applauded the singer enthusiastically.

In Paris Madame Mara was received with enthusiasm, and founded the celebrated party of the Maratistes, to which was opposed the almost equally distinguished sect of the Todistes. Madame Todi was a Portuguese, and she and Madame Mara were the chief, though contending, attractions at the Concert Spirituel of Paris, in 1782. These rivalries between singers have occasioned, in various countries and at various times, a good many foolish verses and *mots*. The Mara and Todi disputes, however, inspired one really good stanza, which is as follows :—

“Todi par sa voix touchante,
De doux pleurs mouille mes yeux ;
Mara plus vive, plus brillante,
M'étonne, me transporte aux cieux.
L'une ravit et l'autre enchante,
Mais celle qui plait le mieux,
Est toujours celle qui chante.”

Of Madame Mara's performances in London, where she obtained her greatest and most enduring triumphs, I shall speak in another chapter.

A good notion of the weak points in the Opera in Italy during the early part of the 18th century is given,

that is to say, is conveyed ironically, in the celebrated satire by Marcello, entitled *Teatro a la Moda*, &c., &c.*

The author begins by telling the poet, that "there is no occasion for his reading, or having read, the old Greek and Latin authors: for this good reason, that the ancients never read any of the works of the moderns. He will not ask any questions about the ability of the performers, but will rather inquire whether the theatre is provided with a good bear, a good lion, a good nightingale, good thunder, lightning and earthquakes. He will introduce a magnificent show in his last scene, and conclude with the usual chorus in honour of the sun, the moon or the manager. In dedicating his libretto to some great personage, he will select him for his riches rather than his learning, and will give a share of the gratuity to his patron's cook, or maître d'hôtel, from whom he will obtain all his titles, that he may blazon them on his title pages with an &c., &c. He will exalt the great man's family and ancestors; make an abundant use of such phrases as liberality and generosity of soul; and if he can find any subject of eulogy (as is often the case), he will say, that he is silent through fear of hurting his patron's modesty; but that fame, with her hundred brazen trumpets, will spread his

* The copious title of this work is given by M. Castil Blaze, in his "Histoire de l'Opéra Italien." I cannot obtain the book itself, but Mr. Hogarth, in his "Memoirs of the Opera," gives a very full account of it, from which I extract a few pages.

immortal name from pole to pole. He will do well to protest to the reader that his opera was composed in his youth, and may add that it was written in a few days: by this he will show that he is a true *modern*, and has a proper contempt for the antiquated precept, *nonumque prematur in annum*. He may add, too, that he became a poet solely for his amusement, and to divert his mind from graver occupations; but that he had published his work by the advice of his friends and the command of his patrons, and by no means from any love of praise or desire of profit. He will take care not to neglect the usual explanation of the three great points of every drama, the place, time, and action; the place, signifying in such and such a theatre; the time, from eight to twelve o'clock at night; the action, the ruin of the manager. The incidents of the piece should consist of dungeons, daggers, poison, boar-hunts, earthquakes, sacrifices, madness, and so forth; because the people are always greatly moved by such unexpected things. A good *modern* poet ought to know nothing about music, because the ancients, according to Strabo, Pliny, &c., thought this knowledge necessary. At the rehearsals he should never tell his meaning to any of the performers, wisely reflecting that they always want to do everything in their own way. If a husband and wife are discovered in prison, and one of them is led away to die, it is indispensable that the other remain to sing an air, which should be to lively words, to relieve the feelings of the audience, and make them

compose one of these as a dozen with the orchestra. The modern composer will oblige the manager to furnish him with a large orchestra of violins, oboes, horns, &c., saving him rather the expense of double basses, of which there is no occasion to make any use, except in tuning at the outset. The overture will be a movement in the French style, or a prestissimo in semiquavers in a major key, to which will succeed a *piano* in the minor; concluding with a minuet, gavot or jig, again in the major key. In this manner the composer will avoid all fugues, syncopations, and treatment of subjects, as being antiquated contrivances, quite banished from modern music. The modern composer will be most attentive to all the ladies of the theatre, supplying them with plenty of old songs transposed to suit their voices, and telling each of them that the Opera is supported by her talent alone. He will bring every night some of his friends, and seat them in the orchestra; giving the double bass or violoncello (as being the most useless instruments) leave of absence to make room for them.

“The singer is informed that there is no occasion for having practised the solfeggio; because he would thus be in danger of acquiring a firm voice, just intonation, and the power of singing in tune; things wholly useless in modern music. Nor is it very necessary that he should be able to read or write, know how to pronounce the words or understand their meaning, provided he can run divisions, make shakes, cadences, &c. He will always complain of

his part, saying that it is not in his way, that the airs are not in his style, and so on; and he will sing an air by some other composer, protesting that at such a court, or in the presence of such a great personage, that air carried away all the applause, and he was obliged to repeat it a dozen times in an evening. At the rehearsals he will merely hum his airs, and will insist on having the time in his own way. He will stand with one hand in his waistcoat and the other in his breeches' pocket, and take care not to allow a syllable to be heard. He will always keep his hat on his head, though a person of quality should speak to him, in order to avoid catching cold; and he will not bow his head to anybody, remembering the kings, princes, and emperors whom he is in the habit of personating. On the stage he will sing with shut teeth, doing all he can to prevent a word he says from being understood, and, in the recitatives, paying no respect either to commas or periods. While another performer is reciting a soliloquy or singing an air, he will be saluting the company in the boxes, or listening with musicians in the orchestra, or the attendants; because the audience knows very well that he is Signor So-and-so, the *musico*, and not Prince Zoroastro, whom he is representing. A modern virtuoso will be hard to prevail on to sing at a private party. When he arrives he will walk up to the mirror, settle his wig, draw down his ruffles, and pull up his cravat to show his diamond brooch. He will then touch the harpsichord very carelessly, and

compose one of these as a dozen with the orchestra. The modern composer will oblige the manager to furnish him with a large orchestra of violins, oboes, horns, &c., saving him rather the expense of double basses, of which there is no occasion to make any use, except in tuning at the outset. The overture will be a movement in the French style, or a prestissimo in semiquavers in a major key, to which will succeed a *piano* in the minor; concluding with a minuet, gavot or jig, again in the major key. In this manner the composer will avoid all fugues, syncopations, and treatment of subjects, as being antiquated contrivances, quite banished from modern music. The modern composer will be most attentive to all the ladies of the theatre, supplying them with plenty of old songs transposed to suit their voices, and telling each of them that the Opera is supported by her talent alone. He will bring every night some of his friends, and seat them in the orchestra; giving the double bass or violoncello (as being the most useless instruments) leave of absence to make room for them.

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begin his air three or four times, as if he could not recollect it. Having granted this great favour, he will begin talking (by way of gathering applause) with some lady, telling her stories about his travels, correspondence and professional intrigues ; all the while ogling his companion with passionate glances, and throwing back the curls of his peruke, sometimes on one shoulder, sometimes on the other. He will every minute offer the lady snuff in a different box, in one of which he will point out his own portrait ; and will show her some magnificent diamond, the gift of a distinguished patron, saying that he would offer it for her acceptance were it not for delicacy. Thus he will, perhaps, make an impression on her heart, and, at all events, make a great figure in the eyes of the company. In the society of the literary men, however eminent, he will always take precedence, because, with most people, the singer has the credit of being an artist, while the literary man has no consideration at all. He will even advise them to embrace his profession, as the singer has plenty of money as well as fame, while the man of letters is very apt to die of hunger. If the singer is a bass, he should constantly sing tenor passages as high as he can. If a tenor, he ought to go as low as he can in the scale of the bass, or get up, with a falsetto voice, into the regions of the contralto, without minding whether he sings through his nose or his throat. He will pay his court to all the principal *cantatrici* and their protectors ; and need not despair, by means

of his talent and exemplary modesty, to acquire the title of a count, marquis, or chevalier.

"The *prima donna* receives ample instructions in her duties both on and off the stage. She is taught how to make engagements and to screw the manager up to exorbitant terms; how to obtain the "protection" of rash amateurs, who are to attend her at all times, pay her expenses, make her presents, and submit to her caprices. She is taught to be careless at rehearsals, to be insolent to the other performers, and to perform all manner of musical absurdities on the stage. She must have a music-master to teach her variations, passages and embellishments to her airs; and some familiar friend, an advocate or a doctor, to teach her how to move her arms, turn her head, and use her handkerchief, without telling her why, for that would only confuse her head. She is to endeavour to vary her airs every night; and though the variations may be at cross purposes with the bass, or the violin part, or the harmony of the accompaniments, that matters little, as a modern conductor is deaf and dumb. In her airs and recitatives, in action, she will take care every night to use the same motions of her hand, her head, her fan, and her handkerchief. If she orders a character to be put in chains, and addresses him in an air of rage or disdain, during the symphony she should talk and laugh with him, point out to him people in the boxes, and show how very little she is in earnest. She will get hold of a new passage in rapid triplets, and introduce it in all her

airs, quick, slow, lively, or sad; and the higher she can rise in the scale, the surer she will be of having all the principal parts allotted her," &c., &c.

Enough, however, of this excellent but somewhat fatiguing irony; and let me conclude this chapter with a few words about the librettists of the 18th century. The best *libretti* of Apostolo Zeno, Calsabigi and Metastasio, such as the *Demofonte*, the *Artaserse*, the *Didone*, and above all the *Olimpiade*, have been set to music by dozens of composers. Piccinni, and Sacchini each composed music twice to the *Olimpiade*; Jomelli set *Didone* twice and *Demofonte* twice; Hasse wrote two operas on the *libretto* of the *Nittetti*, two on that of *Artemisia*, two on *Artaserse*, and three on *Arminio*. The excellence of these opera-books in a dramatic point of view is sufficiently shown by the fact that many of them, including Metastasio's *Didone*, *Issipile* and *Artaserse* have been translated into French, and played with success as tragedies. The *Clemenza di Tito*, by the same author (which in a modified form became the *libretto* of Mozart's last opera) was translated into Russian and performed at the Moscow Theatre during the reign of the Empress Elizabeth.

In the present day, several of Scribe's best comic operas have been converted into comic dramas for the English stage, while others by the same author have been made the groundwork of Italian *libretti*. Thus *Le Philtre* and *La Somnambule* are the originals of Donizetti's *Elisir d'amore* and Bellini's *Son-*

wambula. Several of Victor Hugo's admirably constructed dramas have also been laid under contribution by the Italian librettists of the present day. Donizetti's *Lucrezia* is founded on *Lucrece Borgia*; Verdi's *Ernani* on *Hernani*, his *Rigoletto* on *Le Roi s'amuse*.

Our English writers of *libretti* are about as original as the rest of our dramatists. *The Bohemian Girl* is not only identical in subject with *La Gitana*, but is a translation of an unpublished opera founded on that *ballet* and written by M. St. George. The English version is evidently called *The Bohemian Girl* from M. St. George having entitled his manuscript opera *La Bohémienne*, and from Mr. Bunn having mistaken the meaning of the word. It is less astonishing that the manager of a theatre should commit such an error than that no one should hitherto have pointed it out. The heroine of the opera is not a Bohemian, but a gipsy; and Bohemia has nothing to do with the piece, the action taking place in some portion of the "fair land of Poland," which, as the librettist informs us, was "trod by the hoof;" though whether in Russian, in Austrian or in Prussian Poland we are not informed. *La Zingara* has often been played at Vienna, and I have seen *La Gitana* at Moscow. Probably the Austrians lay the scene of the drama in the Russian, and the Russians in the Austrian, dominions. Fortunately, Mr. Balfe has given no particular colour to the music of his *Bohemian Girl*, which, as far as can be judged

from the melodies sung by her, is as much (and as little) a Bohemian girl as a gipsy girl, or a Polish girl, or indeed any other girl. The *libretti* of Mr. Balfe's *Satanella*, *Rose of Castille*, *Maid of Honour*, *Bondsman*, &c., are all founded on French pieces. Mr. Wallace's *Maritana*, is, I need hardly say, founded on the French drama of *Don César de Bazan*. But there is unmistakeable originality in the *libretto* of this composer's *Lurline*, though the chief incidents are, of course, taken from the well-known German legend on which Mendelsohn commenced writing his opera of *Loreley*.

One of the very few good original *libretti* in the English language is that of *Robin Hood*, by Mr. Oxenford. The best of all English libretti, in point of literary merit, being probably Dryden's *Albion and Albanus*, while the best French libretto in all respects is decidedly Victor Hugo's *Esmeralda*. Mr. Macfarren has, in many places, given quite an English character to the music of *Robin Hood*, though, in doing so, he has not (as has been asserted) founded a national style of operatic music; for the same style applied to subjects not English might be found as inappropriate as the music of *The Barber of Seville* would be adapted to *Tom and Jerry*. A great deal can be written and very little decided about this question of nationality of style in music. If Auber's style is French, (instead of being his own, as I should say) what was that of Rameau? If "The Marseillaise" is such a thoroughly French air (as every one admits), how is it that it happens to be an importation from

Germany? The Royalist song of "Pauvre Jacques" passed for French, but it was Dibdin's "Poor Jack." How is it that "Malbrook" sounds so French, and "We won't go home till morning" so English—an attempt, by the way, having been made to show that the airs common to both these songs were sung originally by the Spanish Moors? I fancy the great point, after all, is to write good music; and if it be written to good English words, full of English rhythm and cadence, it will, from that alone, derive a sufficiently English character.

Handel appears to me to have done far greater service to English Opera than Arne or any of our English and pseudo-English operatic composers whose works are now utterly forgotten, except by musical antiquaries; for Handel established Italian Opera among us on a grand artistic scale, and since then, at Her Majesty's Theatre, and subsequently at the comparatively new Royal Italian Opera, all the finest works, whether of the Italian, the German, or the French school, have been brought out as fast as they have been produced abroad, and, on the whole, in very excellent style. English Opera has no history, no unbroken line of traditions; it has no regular sequence of operatic works by native composers; but at our Italian Opera Houses, the whole history of dramatic music has been exemplified, and from Gluck to Verdi is still exemplified in the present day. We take no note, it is true, of the old French composers, —Lulli, who begat Rameau, and Rameau, who begat

no one—and for the reason just indicated. There are plenty of amusing stories about the *Académie Royale* from its very foundation, but the true history of dramatic music in France dates from the arrival of Gluck in Paris in 1774.

CHAPTER VIII.

FRENCH OPERA FROM LULLI TO THE DEATH OF RAMEAU.

Ramists and Lullists.—Rameau's Letters of nobility.—His death.
—Affairs of honour and love.—Sophie Arnould.—Madame Favart.
—Charles Edward at the Académie.

LULLI died in Paris, March 22nd, 1687, at the age of fifty-four. In beating time with his walking stick during the performance of a *Te Deum* which he had composed to celebrate the convalescence of Louis XIV., he struck his foot, and with so much violence that he died from the effects of the blow. It is said* that this *Te Deum* produced a great sensation, and that Lulli died satisfied, like a general expiring on the battle field immediately after a victory.

All Lulli's operas are in five acts, but they are very short. "The drama," says M. Halévy, "comprises but a small number of scenes; the pieces are of a briefness to be envied; it is music summarized; two phrases make an air. The task of the composer then was far from being what it is now. The secret had not yet been discovered of those pieces, those finales which have since been so admirably developed, linking together in one well-conceived whole, a variety of situations which assist the inspiration of the com-

* F. Halévy, *Origines de l'Opéra en France* (in the volume entitled "*Souvenirs et Portraits: Etudes sur les beaux Arts*").

poser and sometimes call it forth. There is certainly more music in one of the finales of a modern work than in the five acts of an opera of Lulli's. We may add that the art of instrumentation, since carried to such a high degree of brilliancy, was then confined within very narrow limits, or rather this art did not exist. The violins, violas, bass viols, hautboys, which at first formed the entire arsenal of the composer, seldom did more than follow the voices. Lulli, moreover, wrote only the vocal part and the bass of his compositions. His pupils, Lalouette and Colasse, who were conductors (*chefs d'orchestre*, or, as was said at that time, *batteurs de mesure*) under his orders, filled up the orchestral parts in accordance with his indications. This explains how, in the midst of all the details with which he had to occupy himself, he could write such a great number of works; but it does not diminish the idea one must form of his facility, his intelligence, and his genius, for these works, rapidly as they were composed, kept possession of the stage for more than a century."

The next great composer, in France, to Lulli, in point of time, was Rameau. "Rameau" (in the words of the author from whom I have just quoted, and whose opinion on such a subject cannot be too highly valued) "elevated and strengthened the art; his harmonies were more solidly woven, his orchestra was richer, his instrumentation more skilful, his colouring more decided."

Dr. Burney, however, in his account of the French

Opera of his period (when Rameau's works were constantly being performed) speaks of the music as monotonous in the extreme and without rhythm or expression. Indeed, he found nothing at the French Opera to admire but the dancing and the decorations, and these alone (he tells us) seemed to give pleasure to the audience. Nevertheless, the French journals of the middle of the 18th century constantly informed their readers that Rameau was the first musician in Europe, "though," as Grimm remarked, "Europe scarcely knew the name of her first musician, knew none of his operas, and could not have tolerated them on her stages."

Jean Phillippe Rameau was born the 25th September, 1683, at Dijon. He studied music under the direction of his father, Jean Rameau, an organist, and afterwards visited Italy, but does not appear to have appreciated Italian music. On his return to France he wrote the music of an opera founded on the *Phèdre* of Racine, and entitled *Hippolyte et Aricie*. This work, which was produced in 1733, was received with much applause and a good deal of hissing, but on the whole it obtained a great success which was not diminished in the end by having been contested in the first instance. Rameau had soon so many admirers of his own, and met with so much opposition from the admirers of Lulli that two parties of Lullists and of Ramists were formed. This was the first of those foolish musical feuds of which Paris has witnessed so many, though scarcely more than

London. Indeed, London had already seen the disputes between the partisans of Mrs. Tofts, the English singer, and Margarita l'Epine, the Italian, as well as the more celebrated Handel and Buononcini contests, and the quarrels between the friends of Faustina and Cuzzoni. However, when Rameau produced his *Castor and Pollux*, in 1787, he was generally admitted by his compatriots to be the greatest composer of the day, not only in France, but in all Europe—which, as Grimm observed, was not acquainted with him. Gluck, however, is said* to have expressed his admiration of the chorus, *Que tout gémissé*, and M. Castil Blaze assures us, that “the fine things which this work (*Castor and Pollux*) contains, would please in the present day.”

Great honours were paid to Rameau by Louis XV., who granted him letters of nobility, and that only to render him worthy of a still higher mark of favour, the order of St. Michael. The composer on receiving his patent did not take the trouble to register it, upon which the king, thinking Rameau was afraid of the expense, offered to defray all the necessary charges himself. “Let me have the money, your Majesty,” said Rameau, “and I will apply it to some more useful purpose. Letters of nobility to me? *Castor and Dardanus* gave them to me long ago!”

Rameau's letters of nobility were invalidated by

* By M. Castil Blaze, “*Histoire de l'Académie Royale de Musique*,” vol. i. p. 116.

not being registered, but the order of St. Michael was given to him all the same.

The badge of the same order was refused unconditionally by Beaumarchais, when it was offered to him by the Baron de Breteuil, minister of Louis XVI., the author of the *Marriage of Figaro* observing that men whose merit was acknowledged had no need of decorations.

Thus, too, Tintoretto refused knighthood at the hands of Henry III. of France (of what value, by the way, was the barren compliment to Sir Antony Vandyke, whom every one knows as a painter, and no one, scarcely, as a knight)? Thus, the celebrated singer, Forst, of Mies, in Bohemia, refused letters of nobility from Joseph I., Emperor of Germany, but accepted a pension of three hundred florins, which was offered to him in its place; and thus Beethoven being asked by the Prince von Hatzfeld, Prussian ambassador at Vienna, whether he would rather have a subscription of fifty ducats, which was due to him,* or the cross of some order, replied briefly, with all readiness of determination—"Fifty ducats!"

Besides being a very successful operatic composer, (he wrote thirty-six works for the stage, of which twenty-two were represented at the Académie Royale), Rameau was an admirable performer on the organ and harpsichord, and wrote a great deal of excellent music for those two instruments. He, moreover,

* For a copy of his *Mass*, No. 2.

distinguished himself by his important discoveries in the science of harmony, which he published, defended, and explained, in twenty works, more or less copious.

“Rameau’s music,” says M. Castil Blaze, “marks (in France) a progress. Not that this master improved the taste of our nation: he possessed none himself. Although he had visited the north of Italy, he had no idea that it was possible to sing better than the hack-vocalists of our Opera. Rameau never understood anything of Italian music; accordingly he did not bring the forms of melody to perfection among us. The success of Rameau was due to the fact, that he gave more life, warmth, and movement, to our dramatic music. His rythmical airs (when the irregularity of the words did not trouble him too much), the free, energetic, and even daring character of his choruses, the richness of his orchestra, raised this master at last to the highest rank, which he maintained until his death. All this, however, is relative, comparative. I must tell you in confidence, that these choruses, this orchestra, were very badly constructed, and often incorrect in point of harmony. Observe, too, if you please, that I do not go beyond our own frontiers, lest I should meet a Scarlatti, a Handel, a Jomelli, a Pergolese, a Sebastian Bach, and twenty other rivals, too formidable for our compatriot, as regards operas, religious dramas, cantatas, and symphonies.”

Rameau died in 1764. The Opera undertook the

direction of his funeral, and caused a service for the repose of his soul to be celebrated in the church of the Oratory. Several pieces from *Castor and Pollux*, and other of his lyrical works, had been arranged for the ceremony, and were introduced into the mass. The music was executed by the orchestra and chorus of the Opera, both of which were doubled for the occasion. In 1766, on the second anniversary of Rameau's death, a mortuary mass, written by Philidor, the celebrated chess player and composer (but one of those minor composers of whose works it does not enter into our limited plan to speak), was performed in the same church.

The chief singers of the Académie during the greater portion of Rameau's career as a composer, were Jéliotte, Chassé, and Mademoiselle de Fel. Jéliotte retired in 1775, and for nine years the French Opera was without a respectable tenor. Chassé (baritone), and Mademoiselle de Fel, were replaced, about the same time, by Larrivée, and the celebrated Sophie Arnould, both of whom appeared afterwards in Gluck's operas.

Claude Louis de Chassé, Seigneur de Ponceau, a gentleman of a good Breton family, gave up a commission in the army in 1721, to join the Opera. He succeeded equally as a singer and as an actor, and also distinguished himself by his skill in arranging tableaux. He it was who first introduced on to the French stage immense masses of men, and taught them to manœuvre with precision. Louis XV. was

so pleased with the evolutions of Chassé's theatrical troops in an opera represented at Fontainebleau, that he afterwards addressed him always as "General." In 1738, Chassé left the Académie on the pretext that the histrionic profession was not suited to a man of gentle birth.* But the true reason is said to have been that having saved a considerable sum of money, he found he could afford to throw up his engagement. However, he invested the greater part of his fortune in a speculation which failed, and was obliged to return to the stage a few years after he had declared his intention of abandoning it for ever. On his re-appearance, the "gentlemanliness" of Chassé's execution was noticed, but in a sarcastic, not a complimentary spirit.

"Ce n'est plus cette voix tonnante
Ce ne sont plus ses grands éclats ;
C'est un gentilhomme qui chante
Et qui ne se fatigue pas—"

were lines circulated on the occasion of the Seigneur du Ponceau's return to the Académie, where, however, he continued to sing with success for a dozen years afterwards.

Jéliotte was one of the great favourites of fashionable Parisian society (at least, among the women); but Chassé (also among the women) was one of the most admired men in France. Among other triumphs

* It was precisely because persons joining the Opera did *not* thereby lose their nobility, that M. de Camargo consented to allow his daughter to appear there. See page 89 of this volume.

of the same kind, he had the honour of causing a duel between a Polish and a French lady, who fought with pistols in the Bois de Boulogne. The latter was wounded rather seriously, and on her recovery, was confined in a convent, while her adversary was ordered to quit France. During the little trouble which this affair caused in the polite world, Chassé remained at home, reclining on a sofa after the manner of a delicate, sensitive woman who has had the misfortune to see two of her adorers risk their lives for her. In this style he received the visits of all who came to compliment him on his good luck. Louis XV. thought it worth while to send the Duke de Richelieu to tell him to put an end to his affectation.

"Explain to his Majesty," said Chassé to the Duke, "that it is not my fault, but that of Providence, which has made me the most popular man in the kingdom."

"Let me tell you, coxcomb, that you are only the third," said the Duke. "I come next to the king."

It was indeed a fact that Madame de Polignac, and Madame de Nesle had already fought for the affection of the Duke de Richelieu, when Madame de Nesle received a wound in the shoulder.*

* Among other instances of duels between women may be cited a combat with daggers, which took place between the abbess of a convent at Venice, and a lady who claimed the admiration of the Abbé de Pomponne; a combat with swords between Marotte Beaupré and Catherine des Urtis, actresses at the Hotel de Bourgogne,

Sophie Arnould was a discovery made by the Princess of Modena at the Val de Grâce, whither her royal highness had retired, according to the fashion of the time, to atone, during a portion of Lent, for the sins she had committed during the Carnival, and where she chanced to hear the young girl singing a vesper hymn. The Princess spoke of Mademoiselle Arnould's talents at the court, and, in spite of her mother's opposition, (the parents kept a lodging house somewhere in Paris) she was inscribed on the list of choristers at the king's chapel. Madame de Pompadour, already struck by the beauty of her eyes, which are said to have been enchantingly expressive, exclaimed when she heard her sing, "*Il y a là de quoi faire une princesse.*"

Sophie Arnould (a charming name, which the bearer thereof owed in part to her own good taste, and in no way to her godfathers and godmothers, who christened her Anne-Madeleine) made her *début* in the year 1757, at the age of thirteen. She wore a lilac dress, embroidered in silver. Her talent, combined with her wonderful beauty, ensured her immediate success, and before she had been on the stage a fortnight, all Paris was in love with her. When she was announced to sing, the doors of the Opera were besieged by such crowds that Fréron declared he

where the duel took place, on the stage (cause of quarrel unknown); and a combat on horseback, with pistols, about a greyhound, between two ladies whom the historian Robinet designates under the names of Mélinte and Prélamie, and in which Mélinte was wounded.

scarcely thought persons would give themselves so much trouble to enter into paradise. The fascinating Sophie was as witty as she was beautiful, and her *mots* (the most striking of which are quoted by M. A. Houssaye in his *Galerie du 18me. Siècle*), were repeated by all the fashionable poets and philosophers of Paris. Her suppers soon became celebrated, but her life of pleasure did not cause her to forget the Opera. She is said to have sung with "a limpid and melodious voice," and to have acted with "all the grace and sentiment of a practiced comédienne."* Garrick saw her when he was in Paris, and declared that she was the only actress on the French stage who had really touched his heart.†

As an instance of the effect her singing had upon the public, I may mention that in 1772, Mademoiselle Arnould refused to perform one evening, and made her appearance among the audience, saying that she had come to take a lesson of her rival, Mademoiselle Beaumesnil; that the minister, de la Vrillière, instead of sending the capricious and facetious vocalist to For-l'Evêque, in accordance with the request of the directors, con-

* Castil Blaze.

† It is not so generally known, by the way, as it should be, that Garrick was of French origin. The name of his father, who left France after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, settled in England and married an Englishwoman, was Carric. (See "the Eighth Commandment," by Charles Reade.) On the other hand we must not forget that one of Molière's (Poquelin's) ancestors in the male line was an archer of the Scottish guard, and that Montaigne was of English descent.

tented himself with reprimanding her ; that a party was formed to hiss her violently the next night of her appearance, as a punishment for her impertinence; but that directly Sophie Arnould began to sing, the conspirators were disarmed, and instead of hissing, applauded her.

On the 1st of April, 1778, the day of Voltaire's coronation at the Comédie Française, all the most celebrated actresses in Paris went to compliment him. He returned their visits directly afterwards, and his conversation with Sophie Arnould at the opera, is said to have been a speaking duet of the most marvellous lightness and brilliancy.

When poor Sophie was getting old she continued to sing, and the Abbé Galiani said of her voice that it was "the finest asthma he had ever heard." This remark, however, belongs to the list of sharp things said during the Gluck and Piccinni contests, described at some length in the next chapter but one, and in which Sophie Arnould played an important part.

Mademoiselle Arnould's *mots* seem to me, for the most part, not very susceptible of satisfactory translation. I will quote a few of them in Sophie's own language.

Of the celebrated dancer, Madeleine Guimard, concerning whom I shall have something to say a few pages further on, Sophie Arnould, reflecting on Madeleine's remarkable thinness, observed "*ce petit*

*ver à soie devrait être plus gras, elle ronge une si bonne feuille."**

Sophie was born in the room where Admiral Coligny was assassinated, and where the Duchess de Montbazon lived for some time. "*Je suis venue au monde par une porte célèbre,*" she said.

One day, when a very dull work, Rameau's *Zoroastre*, was going to be played at the Académie, Beaumarchais, whose tedious drama *Les deux amis* had just been brought out at the Comédie Française, remarked to Sophie Arnould that there would be no people at the opera that evening,

"*Je vous demande pardon,*" was the reply, "*vos deux amis nous en enverront.*"

Seeing the portraits of Sully and Choiseul on the same snuff-box, she exclaimed, "*C'est la recette et la dépense.*"

To a lady, whose beauty was her only recommendation, and who complained that so many men made love to her, she said, "*Eh ma chère il vous est si facile des les éloigner ; vous n'avez qu'à parler.*"

Sophie's affection for the Count de Lauragais, the most celebrated and, seemingly, the most agreeable of her admirers, is said to have lasted four years. This constancy was mutual, and the historians of the French Opera speak of it as something not only

* One of Mademoiselle Guimard's principal admirers was de Jarente, Titular Bishop of Orleans, who held "*la feuilles des bénéfices,*" and frequently disposed of them in accordance with the suggestions of his young friend.

unique but inexplicable and almost miraculous. At last Mademoiselle Arnould, unwilling, perhaps, to appear too original, determined to break with the Count; the mode, however, of the rupture was by no means devoid of originality. One day, by Mademoiselle Arnould's orders, a carriage was sent to the Hotel de Lauragais, containing lace, ornaments, boxes of jewellery—and two children; everything in fact that she owed to the Count. The Countess was even more generous than Sophie. She accepted the children, and sent back the lace, the jewellery, and the carriage.

A little while afterwards the Count de Lauragais fell in love with a very pretty *débutante* in the ballet department of the Opera. Sophie Arnould asked him how he was getting on with his new passion. The Count confessed that he had not made much progress in her affections, and complained that he always found a certain knight of Malta in her apartments when he called upon her.

"You may well fear him," said Sophie, "*Il est là pour chasser les infidèles.*"

This certainly looks like a direct reproach of inconstancy, and from Sophie's sending the Count back all his presents, it is tolerably clear that she felt herself aggrieved. He was of a violently jealous disposition, though he had no cause for jealousy as far as Sophie was concerned. Indeed, she appears naturally to have been of a romantic disposition, and a ten-

dency to romance though it may mislead a girl yet does not deprave her.

We shall meet with the charming Sophie again during the Gluck and Piccinni period, and once again when the revolution had invaded the Opera, and had ruined some of the chief operatic celebrities. During her last illness, in telling her confessor the unedifying story of her life, she had to speak of the jealous fury of the Count de Lauragais, whom she had really loved.*

"My poor child, how much you have suffered!" said the kind priest.

"*Ah ! c'était le bon temps ! j'étais si malheureuse !*" exclaimed Sophie.

Sophie Arnould's rival and successor at the Opera was Mademoiselle Laguerre, who, if she had not the wit of Sophie, had considerably more than her prudence, and who died, leaving a fortune of about £180,000.

Among the celebrated French singers of the 18th century, Madame Favart must not be forgotten. This vocalist was for many years the glory and the chief support of the Opéra Comique, which, in 1762, combined with the Comédie Italienne to form but one

* French audiences owe something to the Count de Lauragais who, by paying an immense sum of money as compensation, procured the abolition of the seats on the stage. Previously, the *habitués* were in the habit of crowding the stage to such an extent, that an actor was sometimes obliged to request the public to open a way for him before he could make his entry.

establishment. There was so much similarity in the styles of the performances at these two operatic theatres, that for seven years before the union was effected, the favourite piece at the one house was *La Serva Padrona*, at the other, *La Servante Maitresse*, that is to say, Pergolese's favourite work translated into French.

The history of the Opera in France during the latter half of the 18th century abounds in excellent anecdotes; and several very interesting ones are told of Marshal Saxe. This brave man was much loved by the beautiful women of his day. In M. Scribe's admirable play of *Adrienne Lecouvreur*, Maurice de Saxe is made to say, that whatever celebrity he may attain, his name will never be mentioned without recalling that of Adrienne Lecouvreur. Some genealogist, without affectation, ought to tell us how many persons illustrious in the arts are descendants of Marshal Saxe, or of Adrienne Lecouvreur, or of both. It would be an interesting list, at the head of which the names of George Sand, and of Francœur the mathematician, might figure. But I was about to say, that the mention of the great Maurice de Saxe recalled to me not only Adrienne Lecouvreur, but also the charming Fifine Desaigles, one of the fairest and most fascinating of *blondes*, the beautiful and talented Madame Favart, and a good many other theatrical fair ones. When the Marshal died, poor Fifine went into mourning for him, and wore black, even on the stage, for as

many days as it appeared to her that his passionate affection for her had lasted. It is uncertain whether or not the warrior's love for Madame Favart was returned. The Marshal said it was; the lady said it was not; the lady's husband said he didn't know. The best story told about Marshal Saxe and Madame Favart, or rather Mademoiselle Chantilly, which was at that time her name, is one relating to her elopement with Favart from Maestricht, during the siege. Mademoiselle Chantilly was a member of the operatic *troupe* engaged by the Marshal to follow the army of Flanders,* and of which Favart was the director. Marshal Saxe became deeply enamoured of the young *prima donna*, and made proposals to her of a nature partly flattering, partly the reverse. Mademoiselle Chantilly, however, preferred Favart, and contrived to escape with him one dark and stormy night. Indeed, so tempestuous was it, that a bridge, which formed the communication between the main body of the army and a corps on the other side of the river, was carried away, leaving the detached regiments quite at the mercy of the enemy. The next morning an officer visited the

* Compare this with the Duke of Wellington keeping foxhounds in the Peninsula, and observe the characteristic pastimes of English and French generals. So, in our House of Commons, there is always an adjournment over the Derby day; in France, nothing used to empty the Chamber of Deputies so much as a new opera; and during the last French republic, when a question affecting its very existence was about to be discussed, the *Assemblée Nationale* was quite deserted, from the anxiety of the members to be present at the first representation of the *Prophète*.

Marshal in his tent, and found him in a state of great grief and agitation.

"It is a sad affair, no doubt," said the visitor ;
"but it can be remedied."

"Remedied !" exclaimed the distressed hero ; "no ;
all hope is lost ; I am in despair !"

The officer showed that the bridge might be repaired in such and such a manner ; upon which, the great commander, whom no military disaster could depress, but who was now profoundly afflicted by the loss of a very charming singer, replied—

"Are you talking about the bridge ? That can be mended in a couple of hours. I was thinking of Chantilly. Perfidious girl ! she has deserted me !"

Among the historical persons who figured at the Académie Musique about the middle of the 18th century, we must not forget Charles Edward, who was taken prisoner there. The Duke de Biron had been ordered to see to his arrest, and on the evening of the 11th December, when it was known that he intended to visit the Opera, surrounded the building with twelve hundred guards as soon as the Young Pretender had entered it. The prince was taken to Vincennes, and kept there four days. He was then liberated, and expelled from France in accordance with the terms of the treaty of 1748, so humiliating to the French arms.

The servants of the Young Pretender, and with them one of the retinue of the Princess de Talmont, whose

antiquated charms had detained the Chevalier de St. Georges at Paris, were sent to the Bastille, upon which the princess wrote the following letter to M. de Maurepas:—

“The king, sir, has just covered himself with immortal glory by arresting Prince Edward. I have no doubt but that His Majesty will order a *Te Deum* to be sung, to thank God for so brilliant a victory. But as Placide, my lacquey, taken in this memorable expedition, can add nothing to His Majesty’s laurels, I beg you to send him back to me.”

“The only Englishman the regiment of French guards has taken throughout the war!” exclaimed the Princess de Conti, when she heard of the arrest.

There was a curious literary apparition at the Académie in 1750, on the occasion of the revival of *Thétis et Pélée*, when Fontenelle, the author of the libretto of that opera, entered a box, and sat down just where he had taken his place sixty years before, on the first night of its production. The public, delighted, no doubt, to see that men could live so long, and get so much enjoyment out of life, applauded with enthusiasm.

In this necessarily incomplete history of the Opera (anything like a full narrative of its rise and progress, with particulars of the lives of all the great composers and singers, would fill ten large volumes and would probably not find a hundred readers) there are some

forms of the lyric drama to which I can scarcely do more than allude. My great difficulty is to know what to omit, but I think that in addressing English readers I am justified in passing hastily over the Pulcinella Operas of Italy and the Opéra Comique of France. I shall say very little about the ballad operas of England, which are no longer played, which led to nothing, and which do not interest me personally. The lowest style of Italian comic opera, again, has not only exercised no influence, but has never attained even a moderate amount of success in this country. Not so the Opéra Comique of France, if Auber is to be taken as its representative. But the author of the *Muette de Portici*, *Gustave III.*, and *Fra Diavolo*, is not only the greatest dramatic composer France has produced, but one of the greatest dramatic composers of the century. By his masterly concerted pieces and finales he has given an importance to the *Opéra Comique* which it did not possess before his time, and if he had never written works of that class at all he would still be one of the favourite composers of the English public, esteemed and studied by musicians, and admired by all classes. The French historians of the Opéra Comique show that, as regards the dramatic form, it has its origin in the *vaudeville*, many of the old *opéras comiques* being, in fact, little more than *vaudevilles*, with original airs in place of songs adapted to tunes already known. In a musical point of view, however, the French owe their lyrical comedy to the Italians. Monsigny, Philidor, Grétry,

the founders of the style, were felicitous imitators of the Pergoleses, the Leos, the Vincis, and the Piccinnis. "In *Le Déserteur*, *Le Roi et le Fermier*, *Le Maréchal Ferrant*, *Le Tableau Parlant*, we are struck," says M. Scudo, the excellent musical critic of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, "as Dr. Burney was, in 1770, to find more than one recollection of *La Serva Padrona*, *La Cecchina*, and other opera buffas by the first masters of the Neapolitan school. The influence of Cimarosa, Paesiello, Anfossi, may be remarked in the works of Dalayrac, Berton, Boieldieu, and Nicolo. Boieldieu afterwards imitated Rossini to some extent in *La Dame Blanche*, but the chief followers of this great Italian master in France have been Hérold and Auber." This brings us down to the present day, when we find Meyerbeer, the composer of great choral and orchestral schemes, the cultivator of musico-dramatic "effects" on a large scale, writing for the Opéra Comique; and in spite of the spoken dialogue in the *Etoile du Nord* and the *Pardon de Ploermel*, it is impossible not to place those important and broadly conceived lyrical dramas in the class of grand opera.

CHAPTER IX.

ROUSSEAU AS A CRITIC AND AS A COMPOSER OF MUSIC.

The Musical Dictionary.—Account of the French Opera from the *Nouvelle Héloïse*.—*Le devin du Village*.—Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Granet of Lyons.

ROUSSEAU, a man of a decidedly musical organisation, who, during his residence in Italy, learnt, as he tells us in the *Confessions*, to love the music of Italy; who wrote so earnestly and so well in favour of that music, and against the psalmody of Lulli and Rameau, in his celebrated *Lettre sur la Musique Française*; and who had sufficient candour, or, rather let us say, a sufficiently sincere love of art to express the enthusiasm he felt for Gluck when all the other writers in France, who had ever praised Italian music, felt bound to depreciate him blindly, for the greater glory of Piccinni; this Rousseau, who cared more for music than for truth or honour, and who has now been proved to have stolen from two obscure, but not altogether unknown, composers the music which he represented to be his own, in *Pygmalion*, and the *Devin du Village*, has given in his *Dictionnaire Musicale*, in the before-mentioned *Lettre sur la Musique Fran-*

caise, but above all in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, the best general account that can be obtained of the Opera in France during the middle of the 18th century. I will begin with Rousseau's article on the Opera (omitting only the end, which relates to the ballet), from the *Dictionnaire Musicale* :—

“An opera is a dramatic and lyrical spectacle, designed to combine the enchantments of all the fine arts by the representation of some passionate action through sensations so agreeable as to excite both interest and illusion.*

“The constituent parts of an opera are the poem, the music, and the decoration. By poetry, the spectacle speaks to the mind ; by music, to the ear ; and by painting, to the eye : all combining, through different organs, to make the same impression on the heart. Of these three parts, my subject only allows me to consider the first and last with reference to the second.

“The art of combining sounds agreeably may be regarded under two different aspects. As an institution of nature, music confines its effects to the senses, to the physical pleasure which results from melody, harmony, and rhythm. Such is usually the music of churches ; such are the airs suited to dancing and songs. But as the essential part of a lyrical scene, aiming principally at imitation, music becomes one of the fine arts, and is capable of painting all pictures ; of exciting all sentiments ; of competing with poetry ;

* On this subject see *ante*, page 1.

of endowing her with new strength ; of embellishing her with new charms ; and of triumphing over her while placing the crown on her head.

“The sounds of a speaking voice, being neither harmonious nor sustained, are inappreciable, and cannot, consequently, connect themselves agreeably with the singing voice, or with instruments, at least in modern languages. It was different with the Greeks. Their language was so accentuated that its inflections, in a long declamation, formed, spontaneously as it were, musical intervals, distinctly appreciable. Thus it may be said that their theatrical pieces were a species of opera ; and it was for this very reason that they could have no operas properly so called.

“But the difficulty of uniting song to declamation in modern languages explains how it is that the intervention of music has given to the lyric poem a character quite different from that of tragedy or comedy, and made it a third species of drama, having its particular rules. The differences alluded to cannot be determined without a perfect knowledge of music, of the means of identifying it with words, and of its natural relations to the human heart—details which belong less to the artist than to the philosopher.

“Confining myself, therefore, on this subject to a few observations rather historical than didactic, I remark, first, that the Greek theatre had not, like ours, any lyrical feature, for that which they called so, had not the slightest resemblance to what we call so.

Their language had so much accent that, in a concert of voices, there was little noise, whilst all their poetry was musical, and all their music declamatory. Thus, song with them was hardly more than sustained discourse. They really sang their verses, as they declared at the head of their poems, a practice which gave the Romans, and afterwards the moderns, the ridiculous habit of saying, *I sing*, when nothing is sung. That which the Greeks called the lyric style was a pompous and florid strain of heroic poesy, accompanied by the lyre. It is certain, too, that their tragedies were recited in a manner very similar to singing, and that they were accompanied by instruments, and had choruses.

“But if, on that account, it should be inferred that they were operas like ours, then it must be supposed that their operas were without airs, for it appears to me unquestionable that the Greek music, without excepting even the instrumental, was a real recitative. It is true that this recitative, uniting the charm of musical sounds to all the harmony of poetry, and to all the force of declamation, must have had much more energy than the modern recitative, which can hardly acquire one of these advantages but at the expense of the others. In our living languages, which partake for the most part of the rudeness of their native climates, the application of music to speech is much less natural than it was with the Greeks. An uncertain prosody agrees ill with regularity of measure; deaf and dumb syllables, hard

articulations, sounds not sonorous, with little variation, and no suppleness, cannot but with great difficulty be consorted with melody; and a poetry cadenced solely by the number of syllables, whilst it gets but a very faint harmony in musical rhythm, is constantly opposed to the diversity of that rhythm's values and movements. These are the difficulties which were to be overcome, or eluded, in the invention of the lyrical poem. The effort, therefore, of its inventors was to form, by a nice selection of words, by choice turns of expression, and by varied metres, a particular language; and this language, called lyrical, is rich or poor in proportion to the softness or harshness of that from which it is derived.

“Having thus prepared a language for music, the question was next to apply music to this language, and to render it so apt for the purposes of the lyrical scene that the whole, vocal and instrumental, should be taken for one and the same idiom. This produced the necessity of continuous singing,—a necessity the greater in proportion as the language employed should be unmusical, as the less a language has of softness and accentuation, the more the alternate change from song to speech shocks the ear.

“This mode of uniting music to poetry sufficed to produce interest and illusion among the Greeks, because it was natural; and, for the contrary reason, it cannot have the like effect on us. In listening to a hypothetical and constrained language, we can hardly conceive what the singers would say, so that with much

noise they excite little emotion. Hence the further necessity of bringing physical to the aid of moral pleasure, and of supplying, by the charm of harmony, the lack of distinctness of meaning and energy of expression. Thus, the less the heart was touched the more need there was to flatter the ear, and from sensation was sought the delight which sentiment could not furnish. Hence the origin of airs, choruses, symphonies, and of that enchanting melody which often embellishes modern music at the expense of its poetic accompaniment.

“At the birth of the Opera, its inventors, to elude that which seemed unnatural, as an imitation of human life, in the union of music with speech, transferred their scenes from earth to heaven, and to hell. Not knowing how to make men speak, they made gods and devils, instead of heroes and shepherds, sing. Thus magic and marvels became speedily the stock in trade of the lyrical theatre. Yet, in spite of every effort to fascinate the eyes, whilst multitudes of instruments and of voices bewildered the ear, the action of every piece remained cold, and all its scenes were totally void of interest. As there was no plot which, however intricate, could not be easily unravelled by the intervention of some god, the spectator quietly abandoned to the poet the task of delivering his hero from his greatest dangers. Thus immense machinery produced little effect, for the imitation was always grossly defective and coarse. A supernatural action had in it no human interest,

and the senses refused to yield to an illusion, in which the heart had no part. It would have been difficult to weary an assembly at greater cost than was done by these first operas.

But the spectacle, imperfect as it was, was for a long time the admiration of its contemporaries. They congratulated themselves on so fine a discovery. Here, they said, is a new principle added to that of Aristotle; here is admiration added to terror and pity. They were not aware that the apparent riches of which they boasted were but a sign of sterility, like flowers which cover the fields before harvest. It was because they could not touch the heart that they aimed at surprising, and their pretended admiration was, in fact, but a puerile astonishment of which they ought to have been ashamed. A false air of magnificence and enchantments, sorceries, chimeras, extravagances the most insane, so imposed upon them that, with the best faith in the world, they spoke with respect and enthusiasm of a theatre which merited nothing but hisses: as if there were more merit in making the king of gods utter the stupidest platitudes than there would be in attributing the same to the lowest of mortals; or as if the valets of Molière were not infinitely preferable to the heroes of Pradon.

“Although the author of these first operas had had hardly any other object than to dazzle the eye and to astound the ear, it could scarcely happen that the musician did not sometimes endeavour

to express, by his art, some sentiments diffused through the piece in performance. The songs of nymphs, the hymns of priests, the shouts of warriors, infernal outcries did not so completely fill up these barbarous dramas as to leave no moments or situations of interest when the spectator was disposed to be moved. Thus it soon began to be felt, that independently of the musical declamation, often ill adapted to the language employed, the musical movement of harmony and of songs was not alien to the words which were to be uttered, and that consequently the effect of music alone, hitherto confined to the senses, could reach the heart. Melody, which was at first only separated from poetry by necessity, profited by this independence to adopt beauties absolutely and purely musical; harmony, improved and carried to perfection, opened to it new means of pleasing and of moving; and the measure, freed from the embarrassment of poetic rhythm, acquired a sort of cadence of its own.

“ Music, having thus become a third imitative art, had speedily its own language, its expressions, its pictures, altogether independent of poetry. Symphony also learnt to speak without the aid of words; and sentiments often came from the orchestra quite as distinctly and vividly expressed as they could be by the mouths of actors. Spectators then, beginning to get disgusted with all the tinsel of fairy land, of puerile machinery, and of fantastic images of things never seen, looked for the imitation of nature

in pictures more interesting and more true. Up to this time the Opera had been constituted as it alone could be; for what better use, at the theatre, could be made of a kind of music which could paint nothing than by employing it in the representation of things which could not exist? But as soon as music learnt to paint and to speak the charms of sentiment, it brought into contempt those of the Wand; the theatre was purged of its garden of mythology, interest was substituted for astonishment; the machines of poets and of carpenters were destroyed; and the lyric drama assumed a more noble and less gigantic character. All that could move the heart was employed with success, and gods were driven from the stage on which men were represented.* . . .

"This reform was followed by another not less important. The Opera, it was felt, should represent nothing cold or intellectual—nothing that the spectator could witness with sufficient tranquillity to reflect on what he saw. And it is in this especially that the essential difference between the lyric drama and pure tragedy consists. All political deliberations, all plots, conspiracies, explanations, recitals, sententious maxims—in a word, all which speaks to the reason was banished from the theatre of the heart, with all *jeux d'esprit*, madrigals, and other pleasant conceits, which suppose some activity of

* "Gods and devils," says Arteaga, "were banished from the stage as soon as poets discovered the art of making men speak with dignity."—*Rivoluzioni del teatro Italiano*.

thought. On the contrary, to depict all the energies of sentiments, all the violence of the passions, was made the principal object of this drama: for the illusion which makes its charm is destroyed as soon as the author and actor leave the spectator a moment to himself. It is on this principle that the modern Opera is established. Apostolo Zeno, the Corneille of Italy, and his tender pupil, who is its Racine, [Metastasio] have opened and carried to its perfection this new career of the dramatic art. They have brought the heroes of history on a theatre which seemed only adapted to exhibit the phantoms of fable. . . .

“ Having tried and felt her strength, music, able to walk alone, began to disdain the poetry she had to accompany. To enhance her own value, she drew from herself beauties of which her companion had hitherto had a share. She still professes, it is true, to express her ideas and sentiments; but she assumes, so to speak, an independent language, and though the object of the poet and of the musician is the same, they are too much separated in their labours, to produce at once two images, resembling each other, yet distinct, without mutual injury. Thus it happens, that if the musician has more art than the poet, he effaces him; and the actor, seeing the spectator sacrifice the words to the music, sacrifices in his turn theatrical gesture and action to song and brilliancy of voice, which transforms a dramatic entertainment into a mere concert. . . .

“ Such are the defects which the absolute perfection of music, and its defective application to language, may introduce into the Opera. And here it may be remarked that the languages the most apt to conform to all the laws of measure and of melody are those in which the duality of which I have spoken is the least apparent, because music, lending itself to the ideas of poetry, poetry yields, in its turn, to the inflections of music, so that when music ceases to observe the rhythm, the accent and the harmony of verses, verses syllable themselves, and submit to the cadence of musical measure and accent. But when a language has neither softness nor flexibility, the harshness of its poetry hinders its subjection to music ; a good recitation of verses is obstructed even by the sweetness of the melody accompanying it ; and one is conscious, in the forced union of the two arts, of a perpetual constraint which shocks the ear, and which destroys at once the charm of melody and the effect of declamation. For this defect there is no remedy ; and to apply, by compulsion, music to a language which is not musical, is to give it more harshness than it would otherwise have. . .

“ Although music, as an imitative art, has more connection with poetry than with painting, this latter is not obliged, as poetry is, at the theatre, to make a double representation of the same object ; because the one expresses the sentiments of men, and the other gives pictures merely of the places where they are, which strengthens much the illusion of the whole

spectacle. . . . But it must be acknowledged that the task of the musician is greater than that of the painter. The imitation expressed by painting is always cold, because it wants that succession of ideas and of impressions which increasingly kindle the soul, all its portraiture being conveyed to the mind at a first look. It is a great advantage, also, to a musician that he can paint things which cannot be heard, whilst the painter cannot paint those which cannot be seen ; and the greatest prodigy of an art which has no life but in movement is, that it is able to give even an image of repose. Sleep, the quietude of night, solitude, and silence, are among the number of music's pictures. Sometimes noise produces the effect of silence and silence the effect of noise, as when one falls asleep at a monotonous reading and wakes up the moment the reader stops. . . . Further, whilst the painter can derive nothing from the musician, the skilful musician will not leave the studio of the painter without profit. Not only can he, at his will, agitate the sea, excite the flames of a conflagration, make rivulets run and murmur, bring down the rain and swell it to torrents, but he can augment the horrors of the frightful desert, darken the walls of a subterranean prison, calm the storm, make the air tranquil and the sky serene, and shed from the orchestra the freshest fragrance of the sweetest bowers.

“ We have seen how the union of the three arts we have mentioned constitute the lyric scene. Some

have been tempted to introduce a fourth, of which I have now to speak.

“The question is to know whether dancing, being a language, and consequently capable of becoming an imitative art, should not enter with the other three into the action of the lyrical drama, or whether it would not rather interrupt and suspend this action and spoil the effect and the unity of the whole piece.

“But here, I think, there can be no question at all. For every one feels that the interest of a successive action depends upon the continuance and growing increase of the impression its representation makes on us. But by breaking off a spectacle and introducing other spectacles which have nothing to do with it, the principal subject is divided into independent parts, with no link of connection between them; and the more agreeable the inserted spectacles are, the greater must be the deformity produced by the mutilation of the whole. . . . It is for this reason that the Italians have at last banished these interludes from their operas. They are, separately considered, a species of spectacle very pleasing, very piquante, and quite natural, but so misplaced in the midst of a tragic action, that the two exhibitions injure each other mutually, and the one can never interest but at the expense of the other.”

Rousseau then suggests that the ballet should come after the opera, which, as every one knows, is the rule at the Italian Opera houses of London, and which ap-

pears to me a far preferable arrangement to that of the French Académie, where no lyrical work is considered complete without a *divertissement* introduced anyhow into the middle of it, or of the Italian theatres where it is still the custom to perform short ballets or *divertissements* between the acts of the opera. Italy, the country of the Vestrises, of the Taglionis, and in the present day I may add of Rosati, has always bestowed much care on the production of its *ballets*. I have mentioned (Chapter I.), that the opera in its infancy owed much to the protection of the Popes. The Papal Government in the present day is said to pay special attention to the *ballet*, and to watch with paternal solicitude the *pirouettes* and *jetés battus* of the *danseuses*. At least I find a passage to that effect in a work entitled "La Rome des Papes,"* the writer declaring that cardinals and bishops attend the Operas of Italy to see that the *ballerine* swing their legs within certain limits.

Having seen Rousseau's views of the Opera as it might be, let us now turn to his description of the Opera of Paris as it actually was; a description put into the mouth of St. Preux, the hero of his *Nouvelle Héloïse*.

"Before I tell you what I think of this famous theatre, I will tell you what is said here about it; the judgment of connoisseurs may correct mine, if I am wrong.

* Published by John Chapman, London.

"The Opera of Paris passes at Paris for the most pompous, the most voluptuous, the most admirable spectacle that human art has ever invented. It is, say its admirers, the most superb monument of the magnificence of Louis XIV.; and one is not so free as you may think to express an opinion on so important a subject. Here you may dispute about everything except music and the Opera; on these topics alone it is dangerous not to dissemble. French music is defended, too, by a very rigorous inquisition, and the first thing intimated as a warning, to strangers who visit this country, is that all foreigners admit, there is nothing in this world so fine as the Opera of Paris. The fact is, discreet people hold their tongues, and dare only laugh in their sleeves.

"It must, however, be conceded, that not only all the marvels of nature, but many other marvels, much greater, which no one has ever seen, are represented, at great cost, at this theatre; and certainly Pope* must have alluded to it when he describes one on which was seen gods, hobgoblins, monsters, kings, shepherds, fairies, fury, joy, fire, a jig, a battle, and a ball.

"This magnificent assemblage, so well organized, is in fact regarded as though it contained all the things it represents. When a temple appears, the spectators are seized with a holy respect, and if the goddess be at all pretty, they become at once half pagan. They

* Addison gives some such description of the French Opera in No. 29 of the *Spectator*.

are not so difficult here as they are at the *Comédie Française*. There the audience cannot indue a comedian with his part: at the Opera, they cannot separate the actor from his. They revolt against a reasonable illusion, and yield to others in proportion as they are absurd and clumsy. Or, perhaps, they find it easier to form an idea of gods than of heroes. Jupiter having a different nature from ours, we may think about him just as we please: but Cato was a man; and how many men are they who have any right to believe that Cato could have existed?

"The Opera is not then here as elsewhere, a company of comedians paid to entertain the public; its members are, it is true, people whom the public pay, and who exhibit themselves before it; but all this changes its nature and name, for these dramatists form a Royal Academy of Music,* a species of sovereign court, which judges without appeal in its own cause, and is otherwise by no means particular about justice or truth.

"Having now told you what others say of this brilliant spectacle, I will tell you at present what I have seen myself.

"Imagine an enclosure fifteen feet broad, and long in proportion; this enclosure is the theatre. On its two sides are placed at intervals screens, on which are grossly painted the objects which the scene is about to represent. At the back of the enclosure hangs

* The origin of this absurd title has been already explained (page 15).

a great curtain, painted in like manner and nearly always pierced and torn that it may represent at a little distance gulfs on the earth or holes in the sky. Every one who passes behind this stage, or touches the curtain, produces a sort of earthquake, which has a double effect. The sky is made of certain blueish rags suspended from poles or from cords, as linen may be seen hung out to dry in any washer-woman's yard. The sun, for it is seen here sometimes, is a lighted torch in a lantern. The cars of the gods and goddesses are composed of four rafters, squared and hung on a thick rope in the form of a swing or see-saw; between the rafters is a cross-plank on which the god sits down, and in front hangs a piece of coarse cloth well dirtied, which acts the part of clouds for the magnificent car. One may see towards the bottom of the machine, two or three stinking candles, badly snuffed, which, whilst the great personage dementedly presents himself swinging in his see-saw, fumigate him with an incense worthy of his dignity. The agitated sea is composed of long angular lanterns of cloth and blue pasteboard, strung on parallel spits, which are turned by little blackguard boys. The thunder is a heavy cart rolled over an arch, and is not the least agreeable instrument one hears. The flashes of lightning are made of pinches of resin thrown on a flame; and the thunder is a cracker at the end of a fusee.

"The theatre is moreover furnished with little square traps, which, opening at need, announce that

the demons are about to issue from their cave. When they have to rise into the air, little demons of stuffed brown cloth are substituted for them, or sometimes real chimney sweeps, who swing about suspended on ropes till they are majestically lost in the rags of which I have spoken. The accidents, however, which not unfrequently happen are sometimes as tragic as farcical. When the ropes break, then infernal spirits and immortal gods fall together, and lame and occasionally kill one another. Add to all this, the monsters, which render some scenes very pathetic, such as dragons, lizards, tortoises, crocodiles and large toads, who promenade the theatre with a menacing air, and display at the Opera all the temptations of St. Anthony. Each of these figures is animated by a lout of a Savoyard, who has not even intelligence enough to play the beast.

“Such, my cousin, is the august machinery of the Opera, as I have observed it from the pit with the aid of my glass; for you must not imagine that all this apparatus is hidden, and produces an imposing effect. I have only described what I have seen myself, and what any other spectator may see. I am assured, however, that there are a prodigious number of machines employed to put the whole spectacle in motion, and I have been invited several times to examine them; but I have never been curious to learn how little things are performed by great means.

“I will not speak to you of the music; you know

it. But you can form no idea of the frightful cries, the long bellowings with which the theatre resounds during the representation. One sees actresses nearly in convulsions, tearing yelps and howls violently out of their lungs, closed hands pressed on their breasts, heads thrown back, faces inflamed, veins swollen, and stomachs panting. I know not which of the two, the eye or the ear, is most agreeably affected by this ugly display ; and, what is really inconceivable, it is these shriekings alone that the audience applaud. By the clapping of their hands they might be taken for deaf people delighted at catching some shrill piercing sound. For my part, I am convinced that they applaud the outcries of an actress at the Opera as they would the feats of a tumbler or a rope-dancer at a fair. The sensation produced by this screaming is both revolting and painful ; one actually suffers whilst it lasts, but is so glad to see it all over without accident as willingly to testify joy. Imagine this style of singing employed to express the delicate gallantry and tenderness of Quinault ! Imagine the muses, the graces, the loves, Venus herself, expressing themselves in this way, and judge the effect ! As for devils, it might pass, for this music has something infernal in it, and is not ill-adapted to such beings.

“To these exquisite sounds those of the orchestra are most worthily married. Conceive an endless charivari of instruments without melody, a drawling and perpetual rumble of basses, the most lugubrious and fatiguing I have ever heard, and which

I have never been able to support for half an hour without a violent headache. All this forms a species of psalmody in which there is generally neither melody nor measure. But should a lively air spring up, oh, then, the sensation is universal; you then hear the whole pit in movement, painfully following, and with great noise, some certain performer in the orchestra. Charmed to feel for a moment a cadence, which they understand so little, their ears, voices, arms, feet, their entire bodies, agitated all over, run after the measure always about to escape them; while the Italians and Germans, who are deeply affected by music, follow it without effort, and never need beat the time. But in this country the musical organ is extremely hard; voices have no softness; their inflections are sharp and strong, and their tones all reluctant and forced; and there is no cadence, no melodious accent in the airs of the people; their military instruments, their regimental fifes, their horns, and hautbois, their street singers, and *guinguette* violins, are all so false as to shock the least delicate ear. Talents are not given indiscriminately to all men, and the French seem to me of all people to have the least aptitude for music. My Lord Edward says that the English are not better gifted in this respect; but the difference is, that they know it, and do not care about it; whilst the French would relinquish a thousand just titles to praise, rather than confess, that they are not the first musicians in the world. There are even those here who

would willingly regard music as a state interest, because, perhaps, the cutting of two chords of the lyre of Timotheus was so regarded at Sparta.—But to return to my description.

“ I have yet to speak of the ballets, the most brilliant part of the opera. Considered separately, they form agreeable, magnificent, and truly theatrical spectacles; but it is as constituent parts of operatic pieces that I now allude to them. You know the operas of Quinault. You know how this sort of diversion is there introduced. His successors, in imitating, have surpassed him in absurdity. In every act the action is generally interrupted at the most interesting moment, by a dance given to the actors who are seated, while the public stand up to look on. It thus happens that the *dramatis personæ* are absolutely forgotten. The way in which these fêtes are brought about is very simple: Is the prince joyous? his courtiers participate in his joy, and dance. Is he sad? he must be cheered up, and they dance again. I do not know whether it is the fashion at our court to give balls to kings when they are out of humour; but I know that one cannot too much admire the stoicism of the monarchs of the buskin who listen to songs, and enjoy *entrechats*, and *pirouettes*, while their crowns are in danger, their lives in peril, and their fate is being decided behind the curtain. But there are many other occasions for dances: the gravest actions in life are performed in dancing.

“ Priests dance, soldiers dance, gods dance, devils

dance ; there is dancing even at interments,—dancing *à propos* of everything.

“Dancing is there the fourth of the fine arts constituting the lyrical scene. The three others are imitative; but what does this imitate? Nothing. It is then quite extraneous when employed in this manner, for what have minuets and rigadoons to do in a tragedy? I will say more. It would not be less misplaced, even if it imitated something, because of all the unities that of language is the most indispensable; and an action or an opera performed, half in singing and half in dancing, would be even more ridiculous than one written half in French and half in Italian.

“Not content with introducing dancing as an essential part of the lyrical scene, the Academicians have sometimes even made it its principal subject; and they have operas, called *ballets*, which so ill respond to their title, that dancing is just as much out of its place in them as in the others. Most of these ballets form as many separate subjects as there are acts, and these subjects are linked together by certain metaphysical relations, which the spectator could never conceive, if the author did not take care to explain them to him in the prologue. The seasons, the ages, the senses, the elements, what connexion have these things with dancing? and what can they offer, through such a medium, to the imagination? Some of the pieces referred to are even purely allegorical, as the Carnival, and Folly; and these are the most

insupportable of all, because, with much cleverness and piquancy they have neither sentiments nor pictures, nor situations, nor warmth, nor interest, nor anything that music can take hold of, to flatter the heart or to produce illusion. In these pretended ballets, the action always passes in singing, whilst dancing always interrupts the action. But as these performances have still less interest than the tragedies, the interruptions are less remarked. Thus defect serves to hide defect, and the great art of the author is, in order to make his ballet endurable, to make his piece as dull as possible.

“After all, perhaps, the French ought not to have a better operatic drama than they have, at least, with respect to execution; not that they are not capable of appreciating what is good, but because the bad amuses them more. They feel more gratification in satirising than in applauding; the pleasure of criticising more than compensates them for the *ennui* of witnessing a stupid composition, and they would rather mockingly pelt a performance after they have left the theatre, than enjoy themselves while there.”

I have already remarked that, although in his *Lettre sur la Musique Française*, Rousseau had praised the melody of the Italians as much as he had condemned the dreary psalmody of the French, he expressed the highest admiration for the genius of Gluck. He never missed a representation of *Orphée*,

and said, in allusion to the gratification that work had afforded him, that "after all there was something in life worth living for, since in two hours so much genuine pleasure could be obtained." He observed that Gluck seemed to have come to France in order to give the lie to his proposition that good music could never be set to French words. At another time he observed that every one complained of Gluck's want of melody, but that for his part he thought it issued from all his pores.

Now let us turn to the *Devin du Village*, of which both words and music are generally attributed to Jean Jacques Rousseau; that Rousseau who, in the *Confessions*, reproaches himself so bitterly with having stolen a ribbon (it is true he had accused an innocent young girl of the theft, and, by implication, of something more), who passes complacently over a hundred mean and disgusting acts which he acknowledges to have committed, and who ends by declaring that any one who may come to the conclusion that he, Rousseau, is, "*un malhonnête homme*," is himself "a man to be smothered," (*un homme à étouffer*).

Le Devin du Village is undoubtedly the work of Jean Jacques Rousseau, as far as the libretto is concerned; but M. Castil Blaze has shown, on what appears to me very good evidence,* that the music was the production of Granet, a composer residing at Lyons.

* *Molière Musicien*, par Castil Blaze, vol. II., p. 409.

One day in the year 1751, Pierre Rousseau, called Rousseau of Toulouse, to distinguish him from the numerous other Rousseaus living in Paris, and known as the director of the *Journal Encyclopédique*, received a parcel containing a quantity of manuscript music, which, on examination, turned out to be the score of an opera. It was accompanied by a letter addressed, like the parcel itself, to "M. Rousseau, *homme de lettres*, demeurant à Paris," in which a person signing himself Granet, and writing from Lyons, expressed a hope that his music would be found worthy of the illustrious author's words; that he had given appropriate expression to the tender sentiments of Colette and Colin, &c. Pierre Rousseau, though a journalist, understood music. He knew that Granet's letter was intended for Jean Jacques, and that he ought to return it, with the music, to the post-office, but the score of the *Devin du Village*, from the little he had seen of it, interested him, and he not only kept it until he had made himself familiar with it from beginning to end, but even showed it to a friend, M. de Belissent, one of the conservators of the Royal Library, and a man of great musical acquirements. As soon as Pierre Rousseau and De Belissent had quite finished with the *Devin du Village*, they sent it back to the post-office, whence it was forwarded to its true destination.

Jean Jacques had been expecting Granet's music, and, on receiving the opera in a complete form, took it to La Vaubalière, the farmer-general, and offered

it to him, directly or indirectly, as a suitable piece for Madame de Pompadour's theatre at Versailles, where several operettas had already been produced. La Vaubalière was anxious to maintain himself in the good graces of the favourite, and purchased for her entertainment the right of representing the *Devin du Village*. This handsome present cost the gallant financier the sum of six thousand francs. However, the opera was performed, was wonderfully successful, and was afterwards produced at the Académie, when Rousseau received four thousand francs more; so at least says M. Castil Blaze, who appears to have derived his information from the books of the theatre, though according to Rousseau's own statement in the *Confessions*, the Opera sent him only fifty *louis*, which he declares he never asked for, but which he does not pretend to have returned.

Rousseau "confesses," with studied detail, how the music of each piece in the *Devin du Village* occurred to him; how he at one time thought of burning the whole affair (a conceit, by the way, which has since been rendered common-place by amateur authors in their prefaces); how his friends succeeded in persuading him to do nothing of the kind; and how, at last, he wrote the drama and sketched out the whole of the music in six days, so that when he arrived with his work in Paris, he had nothing to add but the recitative and the "*remplissage*," by which he probably meant the orchestral parts. In the next page he tells us that he would

have given anything in the world if he could only have had the *Devin du Village* performed for himself alone, and have listened to it with closed doors, as Lulli is reported to have listened to his *Armide*, executed for his sole gratification. This pleasure might, perhaps, have been enjoyed by Rousseau if he had really composed the music himself, for when the Académie produced his second *Devin du Village*, of which the music was undoubtedly his own, the public positively refused to listen to it, and hissed it until it was withdrawn. If the director had persisted in representing the piece the theatre would doubtless have been deserted by every one but the composer.

But to return to the original score which, as Rousseau himself informs us, wanted nothing when he arrived in Paris except what he calls the "*remplissage*" and the recitative. He had intended, he says, to have *Le Devin* performed at the Opera, but M. de Cury, the intendant of the Menus Plaisirs, was determined it should first be brought out at the Court. A duel was very nearly taking place between the two directors, when it was at last decided by Rousseau himself, that Fontainebleau, Madame de Pompadour, and La Vaubalière should have the preference. Whether Granet had omitted to write recitative or not, it is a remarkable fact that recitative was wanted when the piece came to be rehearsed, and that Rousseau allowed Jéliotte, the singer, to supply it. This he mentions himself, as also that he was not present at any of the rehearsals—for it is at rehearsals above

all, that a sham composer runs the chance of being detected. It is an easy thing for any man to say that he has composed an opera, but it may be difficult for him to correct a very simple error made by the copyist in transcribing the parts. However, Rousseau admits that he attended no rehearsals except the last, and that he did not compose the recitative, which, be it observed, the singers required forthwith, and which had to be written almost beneath their eyes.

But what was Granet doing in the meanwhile? it will be asked. In the meanwhile Granet had died. And Pierre Rousseau and his friend M. de Bellissent? Rousseau, of Toulouse, supported by the Conservator of the Royal Library, accused Jean Jacques openly of fraud in the columns of the *Journal Encyclopédique*. These accusations were repeated on all sides, until at last Rousseau undertook to reply to them by composing new music to the *Devin du Village*. This new music the Opera refused to perform, and with some reason, for it appears (as the reader has seen) to have been detestable. It was not executed until after Rousseau's death, and at the special request of his widow, when, in the words of Grimm, "all the new airs were hooted without the slightest regard for the memory of the author."

It is this utter failure of the second edition of the *Devin du Village* which convinces me more than anything else that the first was not from the hand of

Rousseau. But let us not say that he was "*un mal-honnête homme*." Probably the conscientious author of the Contrat Social adopted the children of others by way of compensation for having sent his own to the Enfants Trouvés.

CHAPTER X.

GLUCK AND PICCINNI IN PARIS.

Gluck at Vienna.—Iphigenia in Aulis.—A rehearsal at Sophie Arnould's.—Gluck and Vestris.—Piccinni in Italy.—Piccinni in Paris.—The two Iphigenias.—Iphigenia in Champagne.—Madeleine Guimard, Vestris, and the Ballet.

FIFTEEN years before the French Revolution, of which, in the present day, every one can trace the gradual approach, the important question that occupied the capital of France was not the emancipation of the peasants, nor the reorganisation of the judicial system, nor the equalisation of the taxes all over the country; it was simply the merit of Gluck as compared with Piccinni, and of Piccinni as compared with Gluck. Paris was divided into two camps, each of which had its own special music. The German master was declared by the partisans of the Italian to be severe, unmelodious and heavy: by his own friends he was considered profound, full of inspiration and eminently dramatic. Piccinni, on the other hand, was accused by his enemies of frivolity and insipidity, while his supporters maintained that his melodies touched the heart, and that it was not the province of music

to appeal to the intellect. Fundamentally, the dispute was that which still exists as to the superiority of German or Italian music. Severe classicists continue to despise modern Italian composers as unintellectual, and the Italians still sneer at the music of Germany as the "music of mathematics." Rossini, Donizetti, and Verdi have been undervalued in succession by the critics of Germany, France and England; and although there can be no question as to the inferiority of the last to the first-named of these composers, Signor Verdi, if he pays any attention to the attacks of which he is so constantly the object, can always console himself by reflecting that, after all, not half so much has been said against his operas as it was once the fashion to say against Rossini's. The Italians, on the other hand, can be fairly reproached with this, that, to the present day, they have never appreciated *Don Giovanni*. They consent to play it in London, Paris and St. Petersburg because the musical public of the capitals know the work and are convinced that nothing finer has ever been written; (this is, however, less in Paris than in the other two capitals of the Italian Opera), but the singers themselves do not in their hearts like Mozart. They are kind enough to execute his music, because they are well paid for it, but that is all.

In the present century, which is above all an age of eclecticism, we find the natural descendants of Piccinni going over to the Gluckists, while the legitimate inheritors of Gluck abandon their succession to

adopt the facile forms and sometimes unmeaning if melodious phrases of the Piccinnists. Certainly there are no traces of the grand old German school in the light popular music of Herr Flotow (who, if not a German, is a Germanised Russian); and, on the other hand, Signor Verdi in his emphatic moments quite belies his Italian origin; indeed, there are passages in several of this composer's operas which may be traced directly not to Rossini, but to Meyerbeer.

The history of the quarrels between the Gluckists and Piccinnists has no importance in connection with art. These disputes led to no sound criticism, nor have the attacks and replies on either side added anything to what was already known on the subject of music as applied to the expression and illustration of human passion. As for deciding between Gluckism and Piccinnism (I say nothing about the men, who certainly were not equal in point of genius), that is impossible. It is almost a question of organisation. It may be remarked, however, that no composer ever began as a Gluckist (so to speak) and ended as a Piccinnist, whereas Rossini, in his last and greatest work, approaches the German style, and even Donizetti, in his latest and most dramatic operas, exhibits somewhat of the same tendency. It will be remembered, too, that the great Mozart, and in our own day Meyerbeer, wrote their earlier operas in the Italian mode, and abandoned it when they recognised its insufficiency for dramatic purposes. Indeed, Gluck's own style, as we shall presently see, underwent

a similar change. But it would be rash to conclude from these instances, that Italians, writing in the Italian style, have produced no great dramatic music. Rossini's *Otello* and Bellini's *Norma* at once suggest themselves as convincing proofs of the contrary.

All that remains now of the Gluck *versus* Piccinni contest is a number of anecdotes, which are amusing, as showing the height musical enthusiasm and musical prejudice had reached in Paris at an epoch when music and the arts generally were about the last things that should have occupied the French. But before calling attention to a few of the principal incidents in this harmonious civil war, let me sketch the early career of each of the great leaders.

Gluck was born, in 1712, of Bohemian parents, so that he was almost certainly not of German but of Slavonian origin.* Young Gluck learnt the scale simultaneously with the alphabet (why should not all children be taught to read from music-notes as they are taught to read from ordinary typography?) and soon afterwards received lessons on the violoncello, which, however, were put a stop to by the death of his father.

Little Christopher was left an orphan at a very early age. Fortunately, he had made sufficient progress

* Gluck's name proves nothing to the contrary. The Slavonian languages are such unknown tongues, and so unpronounceable to the West of Europe that Slavonians have in numerous instances Latinised their names like Copernicus (a Pole), or Gallicised them like Chopin (also a Pole), or above all, have Germanised them like Guttenberg (a native of Kutna Gora in Bohemia), Schwarzenberg from Tcherná Gora, the Black Mountain).

on the violoncello to obtain an engagement with a company of wandering musicians. Thus he contrived to exist until the troupe had wandered as far as Vienna, where his talent attracted the attention of a few sympathetic and generous men, who enabled him to complete his musical education in peace.

After studying harmony and counterpoint, Gluck determined to leave the capital of Germany for Italy; for in those days no one was accounted a musician who had not derived a certain amount of his inspiration from Italian sources. After studying four years under the celebrated Martini, he felt that the time had come for him to produce a work of his own. His "*Artaxerxes*" was given at Milan with success, and this opera was followed by seven others, which were brought out either at Venice, Cremona or Turin. Five years sufficed for Gluck to make an immense name in Italy. His reputation even extended to the other countries of Europe and the offers he received from the English were sufficiently liberal to tempt the rising composer to pay a visit to London. Here, however, he had to contend with the genius and celebrity of Handel, compared with whom he was as yet but a composer of mediocrity. He returned to Vienna not very well pleased with his reception in England, and soon afterwards made his appearance once more in Italy, where he produced five other works, all of which were successful. Hitherto Gluck's style had been quite in accordance with the Italian taste, and the Italians did not think

of reproaching him with any want of melody. On the contrary, they applauded his works, as if they had been signed by one of their most esteemed masters. But if the Italians were satisfied with Gluck, Gluck was not satisfied with the Italians; and it was not until he had left Italy, that he discovered his true vein.

Gluck was forty-six years of age when he brought out his *Alceste*, the first work composed in the style which is now regarded as peculiarly his own. *Alceste*, and *Orpheus*, by which it was followed, created a great sensation in Germany, and when the Chevalier Gluck composed a work "by command," in honour of the Emperor Joseph's marriage, it was played, not perhaps by the greatest artists in Germany, but certainly by the most distinguished, for the principal parts were distributed among four arch-duchesses and an arch-duke. Where are the dukes and duchesses now who could play, not with success, but without disastrous failure, in an opera by Gluck?

It so happened that at Vienna, attached to the French embassy, lived a certain M. du Rollet, who was in the habit of considering himself a poet. To him Gluck confided his project of visiting Paris, and composing for the French stage. Du Rollet not only encouraged the musician in his intentions, but even promised him a libretto of his own writing. The libretto was not good—indeed what *libretto* is?—except, perhaps, some of Scribe's *libretti* for the light operas of Auber. But it must be remembered that the *Opéra Comique* is only a development of the vaude-

ville; and in the entire catalogue of serious operas, with the exception of Metastasio's, a few by Romani and Da Ponte's *Don Giovanni* (with a Mozart to interpret it), it is not easy to find any which, in a literary and poetical sense, are not absurd. However, Du Rollet arranged, or disarranged, Racine's *Iphigénie*, to suit the requirements of the lyric stage, and handed over "the book" to the Chevalier Gluck.

Iphigenia in Aulis was composed in less than a year; but to write an opera is one thing, to get it produced another. At that time the French Opera was a close borough, in the hands of half a dozen native composers, whose nationality was for the most part their only merit. These musicians were not in the habit of positively refusing all chance to foreign competitors; but they interposed all sorts of delays between the acceptance and the production of their works, and did their best generally to prevent their success. However, the Dauphiness Marie Antoinette, had undertaken to introduce the great German composer to Paris, and she smoothed the way for him so effectually, that soon after his arrival in the French capital, *Iphigenia in Aulis* was accepted, and actually put into rehearsal.

Gluck now found a terrible and apparently insurmountable obstacle to his success in the ignorance and obstinacy of the orchestra. He was not the man to be satisfied with slovenly execution, and many and severe were the lessons he had to give the French musicians, in the course of almost as many rehear-

sals as Meyerbeer requires in the present day, before he felt justified in announcing his work as ready for representation. The young Princess had requested the lieutenant of police to take the necessary precautions against disturbances; and she herself, accompanied by the Dauphin, the Count and Countess of Provence, the Duchesses of Chartres and of Bourbon, and the Princess de Lamballe, entered the theatre before the public were admitted. The ministers and all the Court, with the exception of the king (Louis XV.) and Madame Du Barry were present. Sophie Arnould was the Iphigenia, and is said to have been admirable in that character, though the charming Sophie seems to have owed most of her success to her acting rather than to her singing.

The first night of *Iphigenia*, Larrivée, who took the part of Agamemnon, actually abstained from singing through his nose. This is mentioned by the critics and memorialists of the time as something incredible, and almost supernatural. It appears that Larrivée, in spite of his nasal twang, was considered a very fine singer. The public of the pit used to applaud him, but they would also say, when he had just finished one of his airs, "That nose has really a magnificent voice!"

The success of *Iphigenia* was prodigious. Marie Antoinette herself gave the signal of the applause, and it mattered little to the courtiers whether they understood Gluck's grand, simple music, or not.

All they had to do, and all they did, was to follow the example of the Dauphiness.

Never did poet, artist, or musician have a more enthusiastic patroness than Marie Antoinette. She not only encouraged Gluck herself, but visited with her severe displeasure all who ventured to treat him disrespectfully. And it must be remembered that in those days a *Grand Seigneur* paid a great artist, or a great writer, just what amount of respect he thought fit. Thus, one *Grand Seigneur* had Voltaire caned (and afterwards from pride or from cowardice refused his challenge), while another struck Beaumarchais, and, after insulting him in the court of justice over which he presided, summoned him to leave the bench and come outside, that he might assassinate him.

The first person with whom Gluck came to an open rupture was the Prince d'Hennin, the "Prince of Dwarfs," as he was called. The chevalier, in spite of his despotic, unyielding nature, could not help giving way to the charming Sophie Arnould, who, with a caprice permitted to her alone, insisted on the rehearsals of *Orpheus* taking place in her own apartments. The orchestra was playing, and Sophie Arnould was singing, when suddenly the door opened, and in walked the Prince d'Hennin. This was not a grand rehearsal, and all the vocalists were seated.

"I believe," said the *Grand Seigneur*, addressing Sophie Arnould in the middle of her air, "that it is the

custom in France to rise when any one enters the room, especially if it be a person of some consideration?"

Gluck leaped from his seat with rage, rushed towards the intruder, and with his eyes flashing fire, said to him:—

"The custom in Germany, sir, is to rise only for those whom we esteem."

Then turning to Sophie, he added:—

"I perceive, Mademoiselle, that you are not mistress in your own house. I leave you, and shall never set foot here again."

When the story was told to Marie Antoinette, she was indignant with the Prince, and compelled him to make amends to the chevalier for the insult offered to him. The Prince's pride must have suffered terribly; for he had to pay a visit to the composer, and to thank him for having assured him in the plainest terms, that he looked upon him with great contempt.

This Prince d'Hennin was a favourite butt for the wit of the vivacious Count de Lauragais, who, as the reader, perhaps, remembers, was one of Sophie Arnould's earliest and most devoted admirers. One day when the interesting Sophie was unwell, the Count asked her physician whether it was not especially necessary to think of her spirits, and to keep away everything that might tend to have a depressing effect upon them.

The doctor answered the Count's sagacious question in the affirmative.

"Above all," continued De Lauragais, "do you

not consider it of the greatest importance that the Prince d'Hennin should not be allowed to visit her?"

The physician admitted that it would be as well she should not see the prince; but De Lauragais was not satisfied with this, and he at last persuaded the obliging doctor to put his opinion in the form of a direct recommendation. In other words, he made him write a prescription for Mdlle. Arnould, forbidding her to have any conversation with the Prince d'Hennin. This prescription he sent to the prince's house, with a letter calling his particular attention to it, and entreating him, for the sake of Mdlle. Arnould's health, not to forget the injunction it contained. The consequence was a duel, which, however, was attended with no bad results, for, in the evening, the insultor and the insulted met at Sophie Arnould's house.

It now became the fashion at the Court to attend the rehearsals of *Orpheus*, which took place once more in the theatre. On these occasions, the doors were besieged long before the performance commenced; and numbers of persons were unable to gain admission. To see Gluck at a rehearsal was infinitely more interesting than to see him at one of the ordinary public representations. The composer had certain habits; and from these he would not depart for any one. Thus, on entering the orchestra, he would take his coat off to conduct at ease in his shirt sleeves. Then he would remove his wig, and replace it by a cotton night-cap of the remotest fashion. When the rehearsal was at an end,

he had no necessity to trouble himself about the articles of dress which he had laid aside, for there was a general contest between the dukes and princes of the Court as to who should hand them to him. *Orpheus* is said to have been quite as successful as *Iphigenia*. One thing, however, which sometimes makes me doubt the completeness of this success, in a musical point of view, is the recorded fact, that "*the ballet*, especially, was very fine." The *ballet* is certainly not the first thing we think of in *William Tell*, or even in *Robert*. It appears that Gluck himself objected positively to the introduction of dancing into the opera of *Orpheus*. He held, and with evident reason, that it would interfere with the seriousness and pathos of the general action, and would, in short, spoil the piece. He was overruled by the "*Diou de la Danse*." What could Gluck's opinion be worth in the eyes of Auguste or of Gaetan Vestris, who held that there were only three great men in Europe—Voltaire, Frederick of Prussia, and himself. No! the dancer was determined to have his "*Chaconne*," and he was as obstinate, indeed, more obstinate, than Gluck himself.

"Write me the music of a *chacone*, Monsieur Gluck," said the god of dancing.

"A *chacone*!" exclaimed the indignant composer; "Do you think the Greeks, whose manners we are endeavouring to depict, knew what a *chacone* was?"

"Did they not!" replied Vestris, astonished at the information; and in a tone of compassion, he added, "Then they are much to be pitied."

Alceste, on its first production, did not meet with so much success as *Orpheus* and *Iphigenia*. The piece itself was singularly uninteresting; and this was made the pretext for a host of epigrams, of which the sting fell, not upon the author, but upon the composer. However, after a few representations, *Alceste* began to attract the public quite as much as the two previous works had done. Gluck's detractors were discomfited, and the theatre was filled every evening with his admirers. At this juncture, the composer of *Alceste* was thrown into great distress by the death of his favourite niece. He left Paris, and his enemies, who had been unable to vanquish, now resolved to replace him.

I have said that Madame Du Barry did not honour the representation of Gluck's operas with her presence. It was, in fact, she who headed the opposition against him. She was mortified at not having some favourite musician of her own to patronize when the Dauphiness had hers, and now resolved to send to Italy for Piccinni, in the hope that when Gluck returned, he would find himself neglected for the already celebrated Italian composer. Baron de Breteuil, the French ambassador at Rome, was instructed to offer Piccinni an annual salary of two thousand crowns if he would go to Paris, and reside there. The Italian needed no pressing, for he was as anxious to visit the French capital as Gluck himself had been. Just then, however, Louis XV. died, by which the patroness of the German composer, from

Dauphiness, became Queen. Madame Du Barry's party hesitated about bringing over a composer to whom they fancied Marie Antoinette must be as hostile as they themselves were to Gluck. But the Marquis Caraccioli, the Neapolitan ambassador at the Court of France, had now taken the matter in hand, and from mere excess of patriotism, had determined that Piccinni should make his appearance in Paris to destroy the reputation of the German at a single blow. As for Marie Antoinette, she not only did not think of opposing the Italian, but, when he arrived, received him most graciously, and showed him every possible kindness. But before introducing Piccinni to our readers as the rival of Gluck in Paris, let us take a glance at his previous career in his native land.

Nicolas Piccinni, who was not less than fifty years of age when he left Naples, for Paris, with the avowed purpose of outrivalling Gluck, was born at Bari, in the Neapolitan territory, in 1728. His father was a musician, and apparently an unsuccessful one, for he endeavoured to disgust his son with the art he had himself practised, and absolutely forbade him to touch any musical instrument. No doubt this injunction of the father produced just the contrary of the effect intended. The child's natural inclination for music became the more invincible the more it was repressed, and little Nicolas contrived, every day, to devote a few hours in secret to the study of the harpsichord, the

piano of that day. He knew nothing of music, but guided by his own instinct, learnt something of its mysteries simply by experimenting (for it was nothing more) on the instrument which his father had been imprudent enough, as he would have said himself, to leave within his reach. Gradually he learnt to play such airs as he happened to remember, and, probably without being aware himself of the process he was pursuing, studied the art of combining notes in a manner agreeable to the ear; in other words, he acquired some elementary notions of harmony. And still his father flattered himself that little Nicolas cared nothing for music, and that nothing could ever make him a musician.

One day, old Piccinni had occasion to visit the Bishop of Bari. He took his son with him, but left the little boy in one room while he conversed on private business with His Eminence in another. Now it chanced that in the room where Nicolas was left there was a magnificent harpsichord, and the temptation was really too great for him. Harpsichords were not made merely to be looked at, he doubtless thought. He went to the instrument, examined it carefully, and struck a note. The tone was superb.

Next he ventured upon a few notes in succession; and, then, how he longed to play an entire air!

There was no help for it; he must, at all events, play a few bars with both hands. The harpsichord at home was execrable, and this one was admirable—

made by the Broadwood of harpsichord makers. He began, but, carried away by the melody, soon forgot where he was, and what he was doing.

The Bishop, and especially Piccinni *père*, were thunderstruck. There was a roughness and poverty about the accompaniment which showed that the young performer was far from having completed his studies in harmony; but, at the same time, there was no mistaking the fire, the true emotion, which characterised his playing. The father thought of going into a violent passion, but the Bishop would not hear of such a thing.

"Music is evidently the child's true vocation," said the worthy ecclesiastic; "He must be a musician, and one day, perhaps, will be a great composer."

The Bishop now would not let old Piccinni rest until he promised to send his son to the Conservatory of Music, directed by the celebrated Leo. The father was obliged to consent, and Nicolas was sent off to Naples. Here he was confided to the care of an inferior professor, who was by no means aware of the child's precocious talent. The latter was soon disgusted with the routine of the class, and conceived the daring project of composing a mass, being at the time scarcely acquainted even with the rudiments of composition. He was conscious of the audacity of the undertaking, and therefore confided it to no one; but, somehow or other, the news got abroad that little Nicolas had composed a grand mass, and, before long, Leo himself heard of it.

Then the great professor sent for the little pupil, who arrived trembling from head to foot, thinking apparently that for a boy of his age to compose a mass was a species of crime.

Leo was grave, but not so severe as the young composer had expected.

"You have written a mass?" he commenced.

"Excuse me, sir, I could not help it;" said the youthful Piccinni.

"Let me see it?"

Nicolas went to his room for the score, and brought it back, together with the orchestral parts all carefully copied out.

After casting a rapid glance at the manuscript, Leo went into the concert-room, assembled an orchestra, and distributed the orchestral parts among the requisite number of executants.

Little Nicolas was in a state of great trepidation, for he saw plainly that the professor was laughing at him. It was impossible to run away, or he would doubtless have made his escape. Leo advanced towards him, handed him the score, and with imperturbable gravity, requested him to take his place at the desk in front of the orchestra. Nicolas, with the courage of despair, took up his position, and gave the signal to the orchestra which the merciless professor had placed under his command. After his first emotion had passed away, Nicolas continued to beat time, fancying that, after all, what he had composed, though doubtless bad, was, perhaps,

not ridiculous. The mass was executed from beginning to end. As he approached the finale, all the young musician's fears returned. He looked at the professor, and saw that he did not seem to be in the slightest degree impressed by the performance. What *did* he, what *could* he think of such a production?

"I pardon you this time," said the terrible *maestro*, when the last chord had been struck; "but if ever you do such a thing again I will punish you in such a manner that you will remember it as long as you live. Instead of studying the principles of your art, you give yourself up to all the wildness of your imagination, and when you have tutored your ill-regulated ideas into something like shape, you produce what you call a mass, and think, no doubt, that you have composed a masterpiece."

Nicolas burst into tears, and then began to tell Leo how he had been annoyed by the dry and pedantic instruction of the sub-professor. Leo, who, with all his coldness of manner, had a heart, clasped the boy in his arms, told him not to be disheartened, but to persevere, for that he had real talent; and finally promised that from that moment he himself would superintend his studies.

Leo died, and was succeeded by Durante, who used to say of young Piccinni, "The others are my pupils, but this one is my son." Twelve years after his entrance into the Conservatory the most promising of its *alumni* left it and set about the composition of an opera. As Piccinni was introduced by

Prince Vintimille, the director of the theatre then in vogue was unable to refuse him a hearing ; but he represented to His Highness the certainty of the young composer's work turning out a failure. Piccinni's patron was not wanting in generosity.

"How much can you lose by his opera," he said to the manager, "supposing it should be a complete *fiasco*?"

The manager named a sum equivalent to three hundred and twenty pounds.

"There is the money, then," said the prince, handing him at the same time a purse. "If the *Donne Dispetose* (that was the name of Piccinni's opera) should prove a failure, you may keep the money, otherwise you can return it to me."

Logroscino was the favorite Italian composer of that day, and great was the excitement when it was heard that the next new opera to be produced was not of his writing. Evidently, his friends had only one course open to them. They decided to hiss Logroscino's rival.

But the Florentine public had reckoned without Piccinni's genius. They could not hiss a man whose music delighted them, and Piccinni's *Donne Dispetose* threw them into ecstasies. Those who had come to hoot remained to applaud. Piccinni's reputation had commenced, and it went on increasing until at last his was the most popular name in all musical Italy.

Five years afterwards, Piccinni (who in the mean-

while had produced two other operas) gave his celebrated *Cecchina*, otherwise *La Buona Figliuola*, at Rome. The success of this work, of which the libretto is founded on the story of *Pamela*, was almost unprecedented. It was played everywhere in Italy, even at the marionette theatres; and still there was not sufficient room for the public, who were all dying to see it. This little opera filled every playhouse in the Italian peninsula, and it had taken Piccinni ten days to write! The celebrated Tonelli, who, being an Italian, had naturally heard of its success, happened to pass through Rome when it was being played there. He was not by any means persuaded that the music was good because the public applauded it; but after hearing the melodious opera from beginning to end, he turned to his friends and said, in a tone of sincere conviction, "This Piccinni is a true inventor!"

Of course the *Cecchina* was heard of in France. Indeed, it was the great reputation achieved by that opera which first rendered the Parisians anxious to hear Piccinni, and which inspired Madame Du Barry with the hope that in the Neapolitan composer she might find a successful rival to the great German musician patronised by Marie Antoinette.

Piccinni, after accepting the invitation to dispute the prize of popularity in Paris with Gluck, resolved to commence a new opera forthwith, and had no sooner reached the French capital than he asked one of the most distinguished authors of the day to furnish him with a *libretto*. Marmontel, to whom

the request was made, gave him his *Roland*, which was the Roland of Quinault cut down from five acts to three. Unfortunately, Piccinni did not understand a word of French. Marmontel was therefore obliged to write beneath each French word its Italian equivalent, which caused it to be said that he was not only Piccinni's poet, but also his dictionary.

Gluck was in Germany when Piccinni arrived, and on hearing of the manœuvres of Madame du Barry and the Marquis Caraccioli to supplant him in the favour of the Parisian public, he fell into a violent passion, and wrote a furious letter on the subject, which was made public. Above all, he was enraged at the Academy having accepted from his adversary an opera on the subject of Roland, for he had agreed to compose an *Orlando* for them himself.

"Do you know that the Chevalier is coming back to us with an *Armida* and an *Orlando* in his portfolio?" said the Abbé Arnaud, one of Gluck's most fervent admirers.

"But Piccinni is also at work at an *Orlando*?" replied one of the Piccinnists.

"So much the better," returned the Abbé, "for then we shall have an *Orlando* and also an *Orlandino*."

Marmontel heard of this *mot*, which caused him to address some unpleasant observations to the Abbé the first time he met him in society.

But the Abbé was not to be silenced. One night, when Gluck's *Alceste* was being played, he happened to occupy the next seat to Marmontel. *Alceste*

played by Mademoiselle Lesueur, has, at the end of the second act, to exclaim—

"Il me déchire le cœur."

"Ah, Mademoiselle," said the Academician quite aloud, *"vous me déchirez les oreilles."*

"What a fortunate thing for you, Sir," said the Abbé, "if you could get new ones."

Of course the two armies had their generals. Among those of the Piccinnists were some of the greatest literary men of the day—Marmontel, La Harpe, D'Alembert, &c. The only writers on Gluck's side were Suard, and the Abbé Arnaud, for Rousseau, much as he admired Gluck, cannot be reckoned among his partisans. Suard, who wrote under a pseudonym, generally contrived to raise the laugh against his adversaries. The Abbé Arnaud, as we have seen, used to defend his composer in society, and constituted himself his champion wherever there appeared to be the least necessity, or even opportunity, of doing so. Volumes upon volumes were written on each side; but of course no one was converted.

The Gluckists persisted in saying that Piccinni would never be able to compose anything better than concert music.

The Piccinnists, on the other hand, denied that Gluck had the gift of melody, though they readily admitted that he had this advantage over his adversary—he made a great deal more noise.

In the meanwhile the rehearsals of Piccinni's

Orlando, or *Orlandino*, as the Abbé Arnaud called it, were not going on favourably. The orchestra, which had been subdued by the energetic Gluck, rebelled against Piccinni, who was quite in despair at the vast inferiority of the French to the Italian musicians.

"Everything goes wrong," he said to Marmontel; "there is nothing to be done with them."

Marmontel was then obliged to interfere himself. Profiting by Piccinni's forbearance, directors, singers, and musicians were in the habit of treating him with the coolest indifference. Once, when Marmontel went to rehearsal, he found that none of the principal singers were present, and that the opera was to be rehearsed with "doubles." The author of the *libretto* was furious, and said he would never suffer the work of the greatest musician in Italy to be left to the execution of "doubles." Upon this, Mademoiselle Bourgeois had the audacity to tell the Academician that, after all, he was but the double of Quinault, whose *Roland* (as we have seen) he had abridged. One of the chorus singers, too, explained, that for his part he was not double at all, and that it was a fortunate thing for M. Marmontel's shoulders that such was the case.

At last, when all seemed ready, and the day had been fixed for the first representation, up came Vestris, the god of dancing, with a request for some *ballet* music. It was for the thin but fascinating Madeleine Guimard, who was not in the habit of being refused. Piccinni, without delay, set about the music of her

pas, and produced a gavot, which was considered one of the most charming things in the Opera.

When Piccinni started for the theatre, the night of the first representation, he took leave of his family as if he had been going to execution. His wife and son wept abundantly, and all his friends were in a state of despair.

"Come, my children," said Piccinni, at last; "this is unreasonable. Remember that we are not among savages. We are living with the politest and kindest nation in Europe. If they do not like me as a musician, they will, at all events, respect me as a man and a stranger."

Piccinni's success was complete. It was impossible for the Gluckists to deny it. Accordingly they said that they had never disputed Piccinni's grace, nor his gift of melody, though his talent was spoiled by a certain softness and effeminacy, which was observable in all his productions.

Marie Antoinette, whom Madame du Barry and her clique had looked upon as the natural enemy of Piccinni, because she was the avowed patroness of Gluck, astonished both the cabals by sending for the Italian composer and appointing him her singing-master. This was, doubtless, a great honour for Piccinni, though a very unprofitable one; for he was not only not paid for his lessons, but incurred considerable expense in going to and from the palace, to say nothing of the costly binding of the operas and other music, which he presented to the royal circle.

Beaumarchais had found precisely the same disadvantages attaching to the post of Court music-master, when, in his youth, he gave lessons to the daughters of Louis XV.

When Berton assumed the management of the Opera, he determined to make the rival masters friends, and invited them to a magnificent supper, where they were placed side by side. Gluck drank like a man and a German, and before the supper was finished, was on thoroughly confidential terms with his neighbour.

"The French are very good people," said he to Piccinni, "but they make me laugh. They want us to write songs for them, and they can't sing."

The reconciliation appeared to be quite sincere; but the fact was, the quarrel was not between two men, but between two parties. When the direction of the Opera passed from the hands of Berton into those of Devismes, a project of the latter, for making Piccinni and Gluck compose an opera, at the same time, on the same subject, brought their respective admirers once more into open collision. "Here," said Devismes to Piccinni, "is a libretto on the story of Iphigenia in Tauris. M. Gluck will treat the same subject; and the French public will then, for the first time, have the pleasure of hearing two operas founded upon the same incidents, and introducing the same characters, but composed by two masters of entirely different schools."

"But," objected Piccinni, "if Gluck's opera is

played first, the public will think so much of it that they will not listen to mine."

"To avoid that inconvenience," replied the director, "we will play yours first."

"But Gluck will not permit it."

"I give you my word of honour," said Devismes, "that your opera shall be put into rehearsal and brought out as soon as it is finished, and before Gluck's."

Piccinni went home, and at once set to work.

He had just finished his two first acts when he heard that Gluck had come back from Germany with his *Iphigenia in Tauris* completed. However, he had received the director's promise that his *Iphigenia* should be produced first, and, relying upon Devismes's word of honour, Piccinni merely resolved to finish his opera as quickly as possible, so that the management might not be inconvenienced by having to wait for it, now that Gluck's work, which was to come second, was ready for production.

Piccinni had not quite completed his *Iphigenia*, when, to his horror, he heard that Gluck's was already in rehearsal! He rushed to Devismes, reminded him of his promise, reproached him with want of faith, but all to no purpose. The director of the Opera declared that he had received a "command" to produce Gluck's work immediately, and that he had nothing to do but to obey. He was very sorry, was in despair, &c.; but it was absolutely necessary to play M. Gluck's opera first.

Piccinni felt that he was lost. He went to his friends, and told them the whole affair.

"In the first place," said Guinguenée, the writer, "let me look at the poem?" The poem was not merely bad, it was ridiculous. The manager had taken advantage of Piccinni's ignorance of the French language to impose upon him a *libretto* full of absurdities and common-places, such as no sensible schoolboy would have put his name to. Guinguenée, at Piccinni's request, re-wrote the whole piece—greatly, of course, to the annoyance of the original author.

In the meanwhile the rehearsals of Gluck's *Iphigenia* were continued. At the first of these, in the scene where *Orestes*, left alone in prison, throws himself on a bench saying "*Le calme rentre dans mon cœur*," the orchestra hesitated as if struck by the apparent contradiction in the accompaniment, which is still of an agitated character, though "*Orestes*" has declared that his heart is calm. "Go on!" exclaimed Gluck; "he lies! He has killed his mother!"

The musicians of the Académie had a right, so many at a time, to find substitutes to take their places at rehearsals. Not one profited by this permission while *Iphigenia* was being brought out.

The *Iphigenia in Tauris* is known to be Gluck's masterpiece, and it is by that wonderful work and by *Orpheus* that most persons judge of his talent in the present day. Compared with the German's profound, serious, and admirably dramatic production,

Piccinni's *Iphigenia* stood but little chance. In the first place, it was inferior to it; in the second, the public were so delighted with Gluck's opera that they were not disposed to give even a fair trial to another written on the same subject. However, Piccinni's work was produced, and was listened to with attention. An air, sung by *Pylades* to *Orestes*, was especially admired, but on the whole the public seemed to be reserving their judgment until the second representation.

The next evening came; but when the curtain drew up, Piccinni discovered, to his great alarm, that something had happened to Mademoiselle Laguerre, who was entrusted with the principal part. *Iphigenia* was unable to stand upright. She rolled first to one side, then to the other; hesitated, stammered, repeated the words, made eyes at the pit; in short, Mdlle. Laguerre was intoxicated!

"This is not 'Iphigenia in Tauris,'" said Sophie Arnould; "this is 'Iphigenia in Champagne.'"

That night, the facetious heroine was sent, by order of the king, to sleep at For-l'Evêque, where she was detained two days. A little imprisonment appears to have done her good. The evening of her re-appearance, Mademoiselle Laguerre, with considerable tact, applied a couplet expressive of remorse to her own peculiar situation, and, moreover, sang divinely.

While the Gluck and Piccinni disputes were at their height, a story is told of one amateur, doubtless not

without sympathizers, who retired in disgust to the country and sang the praises of the birds and their gratuitous performances in a poem, which ended as follows :—

Là n'est point d'art, d'ennui scientifique ;
Piccinni, Gluck n'ont point noté les airs ;
Nature seule en dicta la musique,
Et Marmontel n'en a pas fait les vers.

The contest between Gluck and Piccinni (or rather between the Gluckists and Piccinnists) was brought to an end by the death of the former. An attempt was afterwards made to set up Sacchini against Piccinni ; but Sacchini being, as regards the practice of his art, as much a Piccinnist as a Gluckist, this manœuvre could not be expected to have much success.

The French revolution ruined Piccinni, who thereupon retired to Italy. Seven years afterwards he returned to France, and, having occasion to present a petition to Napoleon, was graciously received by the First Consul in the Palace of the Luxembourg.

"Sit down," said Napoleon to Piccinni, who was standing ; "a man of your merit stands in no one's presence."

Piccinni now retired to Passy ; but he was an old man, his health had forsaken him, and, in a few months, he died, and was buried in the cemetery of the suburb which he had chosen for his retreat.

In the present day, Gluck appears to have vanquished Piccinni, because, at long intervals, one of

Gluck's grandly constructed operas is performed, whereas the music of his former rival is never heard at all. But this, by no means, proves that Piccinni's melodies were not charming, and that the connoisseurs of the eighteenth century were not right in applauding them. The works that endure are not those which contain the greatest number of beauties, but those of which the form is most perfect. Gluck was a composer of larger conceptions, and of more powerful genius than his Italian rival; and it may be said that he built up monuments of stone while Piccinni was laying out parterres of flowers. But if the flowers were beautiful while they lasted, what does it matter to the eighteenth century that they are dead now, when even the marble temples of Gluck are antiquated and moss-grown?

I cannot take leave of the Gluck and Piccinni period without saying a few words about its principal dancers, foremost among whom stood Madeleine Guimard, the thin, the fascinating, the ever young, and the two Vestrises—Gaetan, the Julius of that Cæsar-like family, and Auguste its Augustus.

One evening when Madeleine Guimard was dancing in *Les fêtes de l'hymen et de l'amour*, a very heavy cloud fell from the theatrical heavens upon one of her beautiful arms, and broke it. A mass was said for Mademoiselle Guimard's broken arm in the church of Notre Dame.*

* We have a right to suppose that the priest did not exactly know for whose arm the mass was ordered.

Houdon, the sculptor, moulded Mademoiselle Guimard's foot.

Fragonard, the painter, decorated Mademoiselle Guimard's magnificent, luxuriously-furnished hotel. In his mural pictures he made a point of introducing the face and figure of the divinity of the place, until at last he fell in love with his model, and, presuming so far as to show signs of jealousy, was replaced by David—yes Louis David, the fierce and virtuous republican !

David, the great painter of the republic and of the empire was, of course, at this time, but a very young man. He was, in fact, only a student, and Madeleine Guimard, finding that the decoration of her "Temple of Terpsichore" (as the *danseuse's* artistic and voluptuous palace was called) did not quite satisfy his aspirations, gave him the stipend he was to have received for covering her walls with fantastic designs, to continue his studies in the classical style according to his own ideas.

This was charity of a really thoughtful and delicate kind. As an instance of simple bountiful generosity and kindheartedness, I may mention Madeleine Guimard's conduct during the severe winter of 1768, when she herself visited all the poor in her neighbourhood, and gave to each destitute family enough to live on for a year. Marmontel, deeply affected by this beneficence, addressed the celebrated epistle to her beginning—

"Est il bien vrai, jeune et belle damnée," &c.

"Not yet Magdalen repentant, but already Magdalen charitable," exclaimed a preacher in allusion to Madeleine Guimard's good action, (which soon became known all over Paris, though the dancer herself had not said a word about it); and he added, "the hand which knows so well how to give alms will not be rejected by St. Peter when it knocks at the gate of Paradise."

Madeleine Guimard, with all her powers of fascination, was not beautiful nor even pretty, and she was notoriously thin. Byron used to say of thin women, that if they were old, they reminded him of spiders, if young and pretty, of dried butterflies. Madeleine Guimard's theatrical friends, of course, compared her to a spider. Behind the scenes she was known as *L'araignée*. Another of her names was *La squelette des grâces*. Sophie Arnould, it will be remembered, called her "a little silk-worm," for the sake of the joke about "*la feuille*," and once, when she was dancing between two male dancers in a *pas de trois* representing two satyrs fighting for a nymph, an uncivil spectator said of the exhibition that it was like "two dogs fighting for a bone."

Madeleine Guimard is said to have preserved her youth and beauty in a marvellous manner, besides which, she had such a perfect acquaintance with all the mysteries of the toilet, that by the arts of dress and adornment alone, she could have made herself look young when she was already beginning to grow old. Marie-Antoinette used to consult her about

her costume and the arrangement of her hair, and once when, for insubordination at the theatre, she had been ordered to For-l'Evêque, the *danseuse* is reported to have said to her maid, "never mind, Gothon, I have written to the Queen to tell her that I have discovered a style of *coiffure*; we shall be free before the evening."

I have not space to describe Mademoiselle Guimard's private theatre,* nor to speak of her *liaison* with the Prince de Soubise, nor of her elopement with a German prince, whom the Prince de Soubise pursued, wounding him and killing three of his servants, nor of her ultimate marriage with a humble "professor of graces" at the Conservatory of Paris. I must mention, however, that in her decadence Madeleine Guimard visited London (a dozen Princes de Soubise would have followed her with drawn swords if she had attempted to leave Paris during her prime); and that Lord Mount Edgcumbe, the author of the interesting "Musical Reminiscences," saw her dance at the King's Theatre in the year 1789. This was the year of the taking of the Bastille, when a Parisian artist might well have been glad to make a little tour abroad. The dancers who had appeared at the beginning of the season had been insufferably bad, and the manager was at last compelled to send to Paris for more and better per-

* Of which, the best account I have met with is given in the memoirs of Fleury the actor.

formers. Amongst them, says Lord Mount Edgumbe, "came the famous Mademoiselle Guimard, then near sixty years old, but still full of grace and gentility, and she had never possessed more." Madeleine Guimard had ceased to be the rage in Paris for nearly ten years, ("*Vers 1780*," says M. A. Houssaye, in his "*Galerie du Dix-huitième Siècle*", *elle tomba peu à peu dans l'oubli*"), but she was not sixty or even fifty years of age when she came to London. M. Castil Blaze, an excellent authority in such matters, tells us in his "*Histoire de l'Académie Royale de Musique*," that she was born in 1743.

By way of contrast to Madeleine Guimard, I may call attention to Mademoiselle Théodore, a young, pretty and accomplished *danseuse*, who hesitated before she embraced a theatrical career, and actually consulted Jean Jacques Rousseau on the subject; who remained virtuous even on the boards of the Académie Royale; and who married Dauberval, the celebrated dancer, as any respectable *bourgeoise* (if Dauberval had not been a dancer) might have done. Perhaps some aspiring but timid and scrupulous Mademoiselle Théodore of the present day would like to know what Rousseau thought about the perils of the stage? He replied to the letter of the *danseuse* that he could give her no advice as to her conduct if she determined to join the Opera; that in his own quiet path he found it difficult to lead a pure

irreproachable life: how then could he guide her in one which was surrounded with dangers and temptations?

Vestris, I mean Vestris the First, the founder of the family, was as celebrated as Mademoiselle Guimard for his youthfulness in old age. M. Castil Blaze, the historian of the French Opera, saw him fifty-two years after his *début* at the Académie, which took place in 1748, and declares that he danced with as much success as ever, going through the steps of the minuet "*avec autant de grâce que de noblesse.*" Gaetan left the stage soon after the triumphant success of his son Auguste, but re-appeared and took part in certain special performances in 1795, 1799 and 1800. On the occasion of the young Vestris's *début*, his father, in court dress, sword at side, and hat in hand, appeared with him on the stage. After a short but dignified address to the public on the importance of the art he professed, and the hopes he had formed of the inheritor of his name, he turned to Auguste and said, "Now, my son, exhibit your talent to the public! Your father is looking at you!"

The Vestris family, which was very numerous, and very united, always went in a body to the opera when Auguste danced, and at other times made a point of stopping away. "Auguste is a better dancer than I am," the old Vestris would say; "he had Gaetan Vestris for his father, an advantage which nature refused me."

"If," said Gaetan, on another occasion, "*le diou de la danse* (a title which he had himself given him) touches the ground from time to time, he does so in order not to humiliate his comrades."

This notion appears to have inspired Moore with the lines he addressed in London to a celebrated dancer.

"—— You'd swear

When her delicate feet in the dance twinkle round,
That her steps are of light, that her home is the air,
And she only *par complaisance* touches the ground."

The Vestrises (whose real name was *Vestri*) came from Florence. Gaetan, known as *le beau Vestris*, had three brothers, all dancers, and this illustrious family has had representatives for upwards of a century in the best theatres of Italy, France and England. The last celebrated dancer of the name who appeared in England was Charles Vestris, whose wife was the sister of Ronzi di Begnis. Charles Vestris was Auguste's nephew. His father, Auguste's brother, was Stefano Vestris, a stage poet of no ability, and Mr. Ebers, in his "Seven Years of the King's Theatre,"* tells us (giving us therein another proof of the excellent *esprit de famille* which always animated the Vestrises) that when Charles Vestris and his wife entered into their annual engagement, "the poet was invariably included in the agreement, at a rate of remuneration

* From 1821 to 1828.

for his services to which his consanguinity to those performers was his chief title."

We can form some notion of Auguste Vestris's style from that of Perrot (now ballet-master at the St. Petersburg Opera), who was his favourite pupil, and who is certainly by far the most graceful and expressive dancer that the opera goers of the present day have seen.

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